



September 28, 2021

Carl W. DuBois
Solano County Grand Jury
600 Union Ave
Fairfield, CA 94533

Dear Mr. DuBois,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further context to the role of LTC Ombudsman in long-term care facilities following the recent grand jury report *Covid-19 Resident Safety in Nursing Homes*. Empowered Aging appreciates the communities concern about residents in long-term care and is pleased to provide the response to the Grand Jury's recommendation.

Recommendation 5: The Administration of the Division of Public Health has indicated that the Ombudsman staff can request and receive a waiver during lockdowns to safely enter SNFs. In light of this, Ombudsman staff request a waiver and continue to visit Skilled Nursing Facilities.

Response to Recommendation 5: Local long-term care ombudsman operate under the auspice of the Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) and receive program guidance and direction from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, a leadership position inside California Department of Aging. Beginning in March 2021 LTC Ombudsman were prohibited from entering licensed long-term care facilities under direction from federal authorities. In order to resume responsibilities OSLTCO issued guidance outlining requirements for resumption of duties. This included; PPE, weekly testing and limitations on frequency of visits. OSLTCO issued guidance in late July 2020. The local LTC Ombudsman program resumed in person, in facility visits as soon as they were authorized to do so, making them one of the first in the country to reenter skilled nursing facilities.

The local LTC Ombudsman office was a regular participant on the calls facilitated by the local public health department and was in communication with its staff. However, it is unable to be deputized by outside organizations and takes guidance and direction from the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the Civil Grand Jury.

With Respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicole Howell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nicole Howell
Executive Director