



Nursing Homes Sound the Alarm: COVID-19 Tests Taking a Week or More, Threatening the Lives of Residents and Workers

RI Health Care Association, which represents 64 nursing facilities in the state, sounded the alarm today, as the testing being done by the state is regularly taking more than seven days to results to be returned. Testing is a key component to keeping COVID-19 contained in a home, as it allows nursing homes to isolate residents and workers. This often asymptomatic virus is quiet and deadly, making testing a critical necessity.

“Today we are sounding the alarm that the lack of timely test results in our homes is causing harm to our residents and workers. Accurate and rapid testing is a necessity in coping with and managing this virus in our nursing homes and so far, we have been left to guess at where COVID-19 lies,” said RIHCA President and CEO Scott Fraser. “RI’s nursing homes must have rapid responses to keep our residents and workers safe. This is truly a matter of protecting lives.”

RIHCA members have engaged with both the Governor’s office and the RI Department of Health (DOH) staff members to resolve this issue in addition to sending official letters requesting this matter receive appropriate and immediate attention over the past months.

“We have had numerous calls with the DOH and governor’s office teams, letting them know testing was coming back slowly and asking them to resolve the issue immediately,” Fraser said.

Over the weekend, one home learned, after a seven day wait, that six staff members tested positive. These staff had been working and interacting with residents and other staff during this time. This same home was still waiting more than a week for the results of 30 more employees.

“This virus is quiet and deadly and the residents of our homes have borne the brunt of it due to their frail health and higher age. RI has one of the highest population of seniors over the age of 85 in the nation, making us one of the most vulnerable states. We need the attention of the administration and the tools necessary to combat this virus,” Fraser said.