

It tells you something when the state Health Secretary moves her mother out of a personal care home

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus May 13, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the coronavirus* 

Followers know that Gadfly has been especially concerned about the conditions in our long-term care facilities.

This feels like a step in the right direction.

Finally.

from Ford Turner and Peter Hall, “New requirement for Pennsylvania nursing homes: weekly coronavirus tests for all residents and staff.” Morning Call, May 12, 2020.

Nursing homes and other group care facilities will be required to test all residents and staff for coronavirus once a week, Pennsylvania Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine announced Tuesday.

“This effort will give us a clearer picture of the extent of outbreaks in nursing homes and a head start at stopping them,” Levine said.

Coronavirus deaths at long-term-care facilities account for two-thirds of fatalities among Pennsylvania residents, and Levine said state and local agencies are working together to address the threat.

According to the Health Department, 2,611 of the 3,806 coronavirus deaths reported to date – or nearly 69% – have been among residents of nursing homes or personal care homes. In Lehigh County, 91 deaths in long-term care facilities accounted for nearly three-quarters of the county’s 123 overall coronavirus fatalities. Northampton County has 101 long-term care facility deaths, or about 63% of its 161 coronavirus deaths.

“By testing every resident and every staff member in every nursing home, we will be able to pinpoint exactly who has COVID-19, who has been

exposed but has no symptoms and [address] positive cases to prevent further spread,” Levine said.

Levine said that starting Sunday nursing homes will be required to report coronavirus infections, deaths and tests through the same system hospitals are using. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced the requirement last week.

The Pennsylvania Health Department then will make information about coronavirus cases, deaths and testing for individual nursing homes available to the public in news conferences and on its website, Levine said.

Asked by a reporter if she had moved her mother out of a long-term care facility, Levine said she and her sister complied with their 95-year-old mother’s request to move from a personal care home to another location.