

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

State should reimburse nursing homes

May 5, 2019

12:00 AM

When our neighbors, our friends and our families can no longer remain at home, Pennsylvania's nursing homes provide 24/7 care, 365 days a year. That's why it's a bit surprising that Gov. Tom Wolf would completely ignore the need to increase the current Medicaid reimbursement rate for nursing home care.

While the cost of providing care has increased, the governor continues to ignore the complex care needs of nursing home residents by proposing reimbursement levels that, once again, remain flat. This is even a greater concern for nursing homes providing ventilator care services.

Our population is getting older and the number of people needing ventilator services is increasing. That trend is going to continue in the decades to come. Nursing homes are going to need more trained staff to keep up with the ever-increasing demand for complex nursing home care.

Our state's inability to properly reimburse nursing homes for the cost of providing care to Medicaid residents means many homes struggle to attract, develop and retain the best staff to care for the people who live there.

Without a new investment, access to care for Medicaid residents, particularly those requiring ventilator care, will be threatened. This may require Medicaid consumers to relocate several hours from their families and communities, or to be transferred to a more expensive acute care setting.

That's why I went to Harrisburg last week to ask our legislators to increase Medicaid funding for nursing home care. Our neighbors, our friends and our families deserve it.

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