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BLUMENTHAL, TENNEY, CORNYN, AND LARSON INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO PROTECT RIGHTS OF RESIDENTS IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

[WASHINGTON, DC] – U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and U.S. Representative Claudia Tenney (R-NY) today introduced the *Essential Caregivers Act*, bipartisan legislation that reaffirms and enforces the right of all residents in long-term care facilities to have in-person access to a loved one, including when visitations are restricted due to a declared emergency. U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and U.S. Representative John B. Larson (D-CT) joined Blumenthal and Tenney in introducing the *Essential Caregivers Act*.

The bipartisan bill seeks to prevent a repeat of the prolonged isolation and lack of care that long-term care residents suffered from during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the *Essential Caregivers Act* ensures that in any future emergency, at least one designated essential caregiver is able to access their loved ones in a manner consistent with all applicable health and safety protocols. The bill also requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to set clear and fair guidelines for essential caregivers to enter facilities during an emergency that protect the safety of facility staff and residents.

“The *Essential Caregivers Act* ensures that the rights of residents in long-term care facilities are protected when a future public health crisis strikes,” said Blumenthal. “By allowing at least one designated essential caregiver to have safe, in-person access to their loved ones during an emergency, our bipartisan legislation guarantees that residents in these facilities will never again have to face the isolation that far too many patients experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, we experienced how dangerous and inhumane it is to isolate seniors and vulnerable patients from the people who care for them the most,” said Tenney. “Families were locked out, residents declined rapidly, and far too many suffered alone. The *Essential Caregivers Act* ensures that never happens again. Loved ones are not visitors. They are caregivers, advocates, and lifelines. This bipartisan legislation protects dignity, safeguards patient rights, and makes sure compassion and common sense guide our response during any future emergency.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic showed just how invaluable caregivers are to the physical and emotional wellbeing of long-term care facility residents and their families,” said Cornyn. “This bill would ensure residents have consistent access to their loved ones or other designated caregivers, even during public health emergencies when regular visitation may be limited.”

“It is still heartbreaking to hear the stories of long-term care residents separated from their support systems during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Larson. “Family members are essential caregivers, providing support to their loved ones in ways that professionals cannot offer. Our bipartisan bill will guarantee responsible visiting access for those loved ones in any future public health emergency. We must never again allow the isolation that took place, harming patients and families. I am glad to join Senators Blumenthal and Cornyn, and Congresswoman Tenney to address this important issue. I urge all my colleagues to join us and pass the *Essential Caregivers Act* now.”

The *Essential Caregivers Act* is endorsed by Caregivers for Compromise. Full text of the bill text is [available here](#). A summary is [available here](#).