



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Keeping Senior Citizens Safe, and Looking After Storm Victims

We have all experienced the challenges of helping loved ones transition from living in what has been home forever to an elderly care center. Residential care facilities, such as Bristol Manor, allow seniors the opportunity to live with dignity and pride in an arrangement appropriate to their needs.

One of my most important pieces of legislation this year, Senate Bill 616, brings clarity to the market by providing consumers with a clear knowledge of exactly what type of services newly defined “assisted-living facilities” provide. The legislation also requires these facilities to meet several requirements contained in the bill before they can be approved by the state. These safety requirements make for better facilities for Missouri seniors.

Too often we limit the living options for seniors. Currently, if a resident of this type of facility takes out his or her hearing aides to sleep, the facility is in violation of state statutes and the resident is removed to either live at home or in a skilled-care nursing facility. Neither option fits the needs of the resident.

Currently, if state regulators wake a resident, they have a certain period of time to dress and exit the building without cues or assistance from staff. Seniors from around the state have been ripped from facilities they call home because of these rules.

While the intentions of the current law are admirable, it doesn’t fit the needs of seniors in the first stages of dementia. I don’t know if even I could meet these requirements! In addition, no clarity in the market exists to even define the purpose and function of these facilities.

Along with AARP and other senior-advocacy groups, I am under the impression that a family, a facility and a patient should have the right to decide what type of living arrangement is appropriate to their needs. If a person wants toast at 9:30 a.m. in the morning, they should be able to have it. If they need someone to assist them to an exit, and the facility can provide it, then they should be able to assess the risk involved and make a decision for the best interest of the senior.

Under the bill, assisted-living facilities cannot admit individuals who require significant care or are a danger to others. They must have a staff large enough and skilled enough to provide 24-hour care. SB 616 also works to protect residents in emergency situations. The legislation requires assisted-living facilities to develop written plans for what to do in case of emergency.

Finally, this measure provides accountability to each resident. Under the legislation, facilities are required to periodically screen residents and develop individualized service plans, which will then be reviewed by residents or their legal representatives.

Since this legislation has seen such strong support from senior-advocacy groups such as the Alzheimer's Association and AARP, it is moving through the Legislature with great success.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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