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PRESS RELEASE

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Illinois Department on Aging to Honor Long-term Care Residents During Residents' Rights Month

SPRINGFIELD, III. – Joining advocates, residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, facility staff and others across the country, the [Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program \(LTCOP\)](#) will honor the individual rights of long-term care residents by celebrating Residents' Rights Month this October. Designated by the [National Consumer Voice for Long-Term Care \(Consumer Voice\)](#), Residents' Rights Month highlights residents living in all long-term care settings, as well as gives special recognition to the work of the individuals who help assure their dignity, privacy and other basic human rights are maintained.

"The Older Americans Act mandates the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to inform residents of their rights," **said Kelly Richards, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.** "This is something we do all year long. However, the designation of October as Residents' Rights Month allows us to shine a larger spotlight and highlight the rights of residents in long-term care facilities. I hope you will join me this month by taking time to reach out to someone in a long-term care facility."

Throughout the pandemic, residents of long-term care facilities were disconnected from the resident and staff communities within their facilities when activities and group dining were limited. Further, residents were disconnected from the broader local community when visitation was restricted, and many residents were unable to leave their facilities to participate in outside activities. This year's Residents' Rights Month theme - Inspiring Unity within Our Community - emphasizes the importance of fostering meaningful community within the facility and encouraging residents' connection to their local community.

Residents' Rights Month is an opportunity to focus on and celebrate awareness of dignity, respect and the rights of each resident. The federal Nursing Home Reform Law, passed in 1987, guarantees nursing home residents their individual rights, including but not limited to: individualized care, respect, dignity, the right to visitation, the right to privacy, the right to complain and the right to make independent choices.

Mandated by the federal Older Americans Act and the Illinois Act on Aging, the LTCOP is a resident-directed advocacy program, which protects the rights of residents in a variety of long-term care settings throughout Illinois. At least 86 paid staff and 61 volunteers work to investigate residents' complaints and concerns, empower them to self-advocate and in some instances, liaise with facility staff to resolve complaints to the residents' satisfaction.

The program also provides older adults and their family members with information about how to find a facility, conducts community education sessions, and supports residents, their families and the public with one-on-one consultations regarding long-term care. All services are provided free of charge.

Respect for yesterday. Support for today. Planning for tomorrow.
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior Helpline at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

To contact an Ombudsman, residents can call the statewide Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, email Aging.SLTCOProgram@illinois.gov, or reach out directly to the [regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in their area](#).

IDoA serves and advocates for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life. For information about the Department's programs and services for older adults and persons with disabilities, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/programs> or contact the Senior HelpLine toll-free at 1-800-252-8966, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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