



a place of mind
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The Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
Government of British Columbia
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8V 1X4

April 10, 2018

Dear Minister Dix,

I am pleased to provide this enthusiastic letter of support for the work being led by the Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils (VIAFC), particularly the *Proposal for Change – Supporting Residents in Care* document.

For the past ten years, I have led a programme of research focused on improving the inclusion of families in long-term residential care (LTRC) in British Columbia. In my research, it is clear that many family members (this term is inclusive of friends) feel excluded from the care their relative receives in care facilities and from the broader organizational decision-making process. Along with colleagues, I recently completed a province-wide survey about the prevalence and characteristics of Family Councils in BC. The survey showed that there are still significant gaps in the existence of Family Councils and authentic engagement family members as part of these Councils. For example, many facilities, despite having a Family Council, do not have a family member Chair the Council and do not have a member of the organization's leadership team attend Council meetings to liaise with families. A key recommendation from the research is to **create policy structures** that require facilities to have family-led Family Councils, along with **dedicated resources** to ensure a provincial network of family leadership in this healthcare sector. Ontario currently has such a structure and they have experienced much success in building family engagement across their province.

With an aging population that will continue to rely on LTRC as a key health service, it is imperative that we further develop capacity around family engagement. In addition to improving family members' mental health and well-being, there are valuable benefits to

residents in terms of quality of life and quality of care, as well as benefits for staff in terms of quality of work life when families are well integrated into LTRC settings.

In British Columbia, we already have an established family association – VIAFC – led by Mr. Kim Slater. With appropriate support from your government, the association could be spread across BC. A provincial Association of Family Councils has the potential to strengthen the long-term care sector and continue to improve care provided to vulnerable and frail British Columbians.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Given your long-standing support of Seniors and dedication to high quality care, I have every confidence your government will take the proposal submitted by VIAFC under serious consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Baumbusch', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jennifer Baumbusch, RN, PhD
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Program Director, Master of Health Policy & Leadership: Seniors Care, Faculty of Applied
Science