



The Honourable Adrian Dix M.L.A.
Minister for Health
Government of British Columbia
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

February 27, 2018

Dear Minister Dix,

RE: Family Councils for Residential Care Facilities

On behalf of the Board of the Nanaimo Division of Family Practice, which represents 225 Family Physicians, Hospitalists, Emergency Room Physicians, Family Medicine Residents, and Nurse Practitioners in Nanaimo, I am writing to you today to voice our support for the *“Proposal for Change – Supporting Residents in Care”* document prepared by the Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils (VIAFC).

The Nanaimo Division of Family Practice has long held a meaningful relationship with the Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils. Their professional representation of the patient and family voice has greatly contributed to the GPSC Residential Care Initiative led by the Nanaimo Division of Family Practice to improve patient experience, and Family Physician capacity in long term care. The VIAFC Chair, Mr. Kim Slater, has been an valuable spokesperson for the perspective of residents and families, and his feedback on behalf of the Family Council membership made a significant contribution to our Advanced Care Planning project. The Family Council is also an active stakeholder in developing Primary Care Home models in Nanaimo.

The development of a sophisticated structure for professional patient advocacy offers a necessary and important role in providing the best possible standards of care for an expanding vulnerable population. Family Councils provide this invaluable resource on behalf of residents and families of residents in long term care. We believe it is crucial that this service is pro-actively offered and is available in all residential facilities in British Columbia.

Our work at the Division brings us into contact with many stakeholders in Residential Care, all of whom recognize that as our seniors age, their cognitive and physical abilities may deteriorate, and when this happens they depend more and more on the support of those around them. Provision of constructive and impartial assistance, information, recommendations for improvement and advocacy can only serve to improve the patient/resident experience and enhance quality of life for our seniors.



We applaud the Ministry of Health guidelines supporting patient rights and we strongly encourage consideration of statutory requirements for appropriate, fair, and impartial patient advocacy through Government legislation. The Association of Family Councils can offer the experience, expertise, and demonstrated best practice which would support the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms declaration that 'Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, **age or mental or physical disability.**'

The Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 (Ontario) provides an excellent example of legislative guidance for care homes to establish Family Councils, and we would welcome the development of similar requirements for residential facilities in British Columbia.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Melissa Oberholster
Board Chair
Nanaimo Division of Family Practice