AN ACT
relating to the right of certain residents to designate an essential caregiver for in-person visitation.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. It is the intent of the legislature to ensure that residents of long-term care facilities and other residences have a guaranteed right to visitation by family members, friends, caregivers, and other individuals. The legislature expects facilities and program providers to ensure that the guaranteed visitation rights are available to residents every day of each year, consistent with existing resident rights. The legislature intends for facilities and program providers to temporarily limit a resident's guaranteed visitation rights to in-person visitation by essential caregivers only during a declared public health emergency.

SECTION 2. Subtitle B, Title 4, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Chapter 260B to read as follows:

CHAPTER 260B. RIGHT TO ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER VISITS
FOR CERTAIN RESIDENTS

Sec. 260B.0001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Commission" means the Health and Human Services Commission.

(2) "Essential caregiver" means a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual selected by a resident,
resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative for in-person visits.

(3) "Executive commissioner" means the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission.

(4) "Facility" means:

(A) a nursing facility licensed under Chapter 242;

(B) an assisted living facility licensed under Chapter 247; or

(C) an intermediate care facility for individuals with an intellectual disability licensed under Chapter 252.

(5) "Program provider" means a person that provides services through the home and community-based services (HCS) waiver program in a residence.

(6) "Residence" means a three-person or four-person residence, as defined by the home and community-based services (HCS) waiver program billing guidelines, that is leased or owned by a program provider. The term does not include a host home or companion care.

(7) "Resident" means:

(A) an individual, including a patient, who resides in a facility; or

(B) an individual enrolled in the home and community-based services (HCS) waiver program who resides in a residence.
VISITS. (a) A resident, resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative has the right to designate an essential caregiver with whom the facility or program provider may not prohibit in-person visitation.

(b) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), the executive commissioner by rule shall develop guidelines to assist facilities and program providers in establishing essential caregiver visitation policies and procedures. The guidelines must require the facilities and program providers to:

(1) allow a resident, resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative to designate for in-person visitation an essential caregiver in the same manner that a resident would designate a power of attorney;

(2) establish a visitation schedule allowing the essential caregiver to visit the resident for at least two hours each day;

(3) establish procedures to enable physical contact between the resident and essential caregiver; and

(4) obtain the signature of the essential caregiver certifying that the caregiver will follow the facility's or program provider's safety protocols and any other rules adopted under this section.

(c) A facility or program provider may revoke an individual's designation as an essential caregiver if the caregiver violates the facility's or provider's safety protocols or rules adopted under this section. If a facility or program provider revokes an individual's designation as an essential caregiver under
this subsection, the resident, resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative has the right to immediately designate another individual as the resident's essential caregiver. The commission by rule shall establish an appeals process to evaluate the revocation of an individual's designation as an essential caregiver under this subsection.

(d) Safety protocols adopted by a facility or program provider for an essential caregiver under this section may not be more stringent than safety protocols for the staff of the facility or residence.

(e) A facility or program provider may petition the commission to suspend in-person essential caregiver visits for not more than seven days if in-person visitation poses a serious community health risk. The commission may deny the facility's or program provider's request to suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation if the commission determines that in-person visitation does not pose a serious community health risk. A facility or program provider may request an extension from the commission to suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation for more than seven days. The commission may not approve an extension under this subsection for a period that exceeds seven days, and a facility or program provider must separately request each extension. A facility or program provider may not suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation in any year for a number of days that exceeds 14 consecutive days or a total of 45 days.

(f) This section may not be construed as requiring an essential caregiver to provide necessary care to a resident, and a
facility or program provider may not require an essential caregiver to provide necessary care.

SECTION 3. Chapter 555, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Subchapter F to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER F. RIGHT TO ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER VISITS

Sec. 555.201. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "essential caregiver" means a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual selected by a resident, resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative for in-person visits.

Sec. 555.202. RESIDENT'S RIGHT TO ESSENTIAL CAREGIVER VISITS. (a) A resident of a state supported living center, the resident's guardian, or the resident's legally authorized representative has the right to designate an essential caregiver with whom the center may not prohibit in-person visitation.

(b) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), the executive commissioner by rule shall develop guidelines to assist state supported living centers in establishing essential caregiver visitation policies and procedures. The guidelines must require the centers to:

(1) allow a resident, resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative to designate for in-person visitation an essential caregiver;

(2) establish a visitation schedule allowing the essential caregiver to visit the resident for at least two hours each day;

(3) establish procedures to enable physical contact between the resident and essential caregiver; and
(4) obtain the signature of the essential caregiver certifying that the caregiver will follow the center's safety protocols and any other rules adopted under this section.

(c) A state supported living center may revoke an individual's designation as an essential caregiver if the essential caregiver violates the center's safety protocols or rules adopted under this section. If a state supported living center revokes an individual's designation as an essential caregiver under this subsection, the resident, resident's guardian, or resident's legally authorized representative has the right to immediately designate another individual as the resident's essential caregiver. The commission by rule shall establish an appeals process to evaluate the revocation of an individual's designation as an essential caregiver under this subsection.

(d) Safety protocols adopted by a state supported living center for an essential caregiver under this section may not be more stringent than safety protocols for center staff.

(e) A state supported living center may petition the commission to suspend in-person essential caregiver visits for not more than seven days if in-person visitation poses a serious community health risk. The commission may deny the state supported living center's request to suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation if the commission determines that in-person visitation does not pose a serious community health risk. A state supported living center may request an extension from the commission to suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation for more than seven days. The commission may not approve an extension under this
subsection for a period that exceeds seven days, and a state supported living center must separately request each extension. A state supported living center may not suspend in-person essential caregiver visitation in any year for a number of days that exceeds 14 consecutive days or a total of 45 days.

(f) This section may not be construed as requiring an essential caregiver to provide necessary care to a resident, and a state supported living center may not require an essential caregiver to provide necessary care.

SECTION 4. As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission shall prescribe the guidelines and adopt the rules required by Sections 260B.0002 and 555.202, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 5. If before implementing any provision of this Act a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision, the agency affected by the provision shall request the waiver or authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the waiver or authorization is granted.

SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.
President of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 25 passed the Senate on March 17, 2021, by the following vote: Yeas 29, Nays 0; and that the Senate concurred in House amendments on May 28, 2021, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 25 passed the House, with amendments, on May 24, 2021, by the following vote: Yeas 144, Nays 0, one present not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

Date

Governor