

The regulations and standards under which your institutions are licensed by the State Department of Health are among the highest in the country. The development of these regulations and standards was accomplished with the collaboration of your representatives. The drafts of the revised regulations and standards, which became effective January 1 of this year, were reviewed at joint conferences attended by members of the Health Department staff and by your representatives and attorneys before they were recommended by the Advisory Board on Hospital Licensing and adopted by the State Board of Health and Mental Hygiene. One of the members of this association served on the Advisory Board on Hospital Licensing. As it was reported to me, the spirit of these joint conferences was to keep the standards as high as possible, consistent with the practical considerations, with the aim of assuring patients and their relatives that the nursing homes will provide a safe and sanitary environment and nursing care and medical supervision adequate to meet the needs of the patients.

The attitude of your State government, including all departments having a relationship with the nursing homes, is one of cooperation and helpfulness. Many of you have been aided by the staff of our Department of Health in the original establishment of your nursing homes. This assistance has continued, and will continue, as you operate and expand facilities. We are aware that from time to time some of you have experienced problems in connection with compliance with the regulations and standards. We know, too, that on most occasions, after you have overcome the difficulties by improvement of personnel and staff and the initiation of safety measures, you have taken justifiable pride in the improved status of your homes.

In many other ways, your State is trying to help you with your problems. For example, since I became Governor the rate of payments to you for public assistance cases has been raised from \$110, \$115 and \$120 a month—depending on the location—to \$135 a month. I am informed that there are now some 2,000 patients in the public assistance category in the nursing homes of our State. Moreover, some \$300,000 has been appropriated in your State budget to finance certain special services required for the adequate care and treatment of these patients. The shortage of licensed practical nurses, a problem which seriously affects your operations, was brought to my attention recently by the Maryland Joint Council to Improve the Health Care of the Aged. I discussed the matter with Health Department officials, and afterward instructed the State Board of Examiners to call together representatives of all groups concerned and try to find a way to increase the number of licensed practical nurses.