



October 22, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

On behalf of Argentum, the largest national association representing the senior living industry, we urge you to consider the following immediate actions to ensure residents who live in senior living communities receive the care they need related to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Provide much needed additional financial resources to the Provider Relief Fund.
- Allocate specific funding from the Provider Relief Fund or other sources specifically for residents and staff of senior living communities.

Senior living communities care for our nation's most vulnerable populations. Nearly 80 percent of all COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. have occurred in people over the age of 65, making this population among the most vulnerable to the virus. For older adults living in senior living communities—whose average age is 85, the risk is even higher. Many senior living community residents require assistance with activities of daily living, putting them in close contact with direct care workers, and a majority suffer from chronic conditions and comorbidities. Financial resources for these communities to assist in the administration of rapid-testing and vaccines is urgently needed.

Senior living communities represent the more than two million seniors and their nearly one million front-line caregivers across 21,600 assisted living, memory care, continuing care retirement communities, and independent living communities.

Though the financial losses of senior living operators continue to mount, the recent distribution for assisted living facilities in the Provider Relief Fund is greatly appreciated.

However,

- Senior living communities provide care to approximately 51% of the seniors that reside in long-term care communities (2M seniors) though have only received 1.7% (\$3B) in funding from the Provider Relief Fund.
- Hospitals, nursing homes, and other long-term care settings together care for 49% of seniors and other vulnerable populations (1.9M people) and have received 85% (\$145B) in funding from the Provider Relief Fund.
- Senior living communities provide care for seniors that have the same or similar acuity as nursing home and other long-term care residents.
- Senior living communities currently estimate COVID-related losses to total \$15 billion.
- Many senior living facilities are reporting declines in admissions of 75% compared to the same period in 2019, including record low occupancy in Q2 2020.



Unlike other providers, whose losses were felt in the earlier days of this pandemic (due to loss of elective procedures), the senior living industry is suffering our most significant losses now and these losses will only be compounded in the future.

Senior living facilities are and continue to be the cornerstone for implementing rapid testing, vaccinations and overall abating the virus in the senior communities. To be effective, however, urgent financial resources are needed. The costs of caring for those most at risk of infection cannot be overstated, and current financial losses are simply not sustainable.

In order to win the COVID-19 battle, senior living communities must have the financial resources to procure tests and acquire the requisite PPE and staff to effectively implement widescale testing.

We strongly believe that the most cost-effective and efficient manner to ensure that senior living facilities can meet the great demands of regular testing to staff and residents, is to provide substantially more funding to the Provider Relief Fund and allocate funding, specifically to senior living communities, to address the wide disparity between the number of seniors that are cared for in senior living communities (2M) and the inadequate 1.7% funding (\$3B) received for COVID-19 related costs and expenses to date.

Secretary Azar, our nation's most vulnerable populations and those who care for them must be prioritized. We respectfully request your consideration and advocacy for additional financial and other resources for senior living communities.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum