

November 3, 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,

Despite caring for the population most vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, many assisted living providers are still waiting for financial relief, according to a new study by Argentum, a national non-profit association representing 70% of the nation's senior living facilities who provide care for nearly 2 million seniors employ over 1 million caregivers. As financial resources dwindle, closures are looming. For the senior residents of these communities, who need direct assistance with activities of daily living such as eating, dressing and personal care, it could mean losing their caregiver and their home.

Assisted living communities are not nursing homes yet provide care for the same vulnerable population. Despite fighting to protect their residents from the pandemic for the past eight months, many have not received federal relief, and most on track to receive just a small fraction of the relief of nursing home. We are concerned that discrepancy could leave senior populations even more vulnerable to the pandemic. Here are what respondents, who represent hundreds of assisted living facilities across the nation, indicated in the survey:

- 45% of assisted living providers who applied for CARES Act relief **still have not received any relief.**
- Of those that have received relief, nearly **one in three said it will only provide a month or less of expenses.**
- Nearly 75% of respondents said their **expenses related to COVID-19 have increased significantly.**
- Nearly 40% said they foresee the **possibility of closures** if their financial situation does not improve

One respondent said:

"We haven't received the [relief] funds yet, but when they arrive, (fingers crossed), it will be an absolute game-changer for us. We could not continue through this winter without it. Our concern now is that we're entering a period of two years of pandemic suppression. We're going to need more support."

Senior living communities currently estimate COVID-related losses to total \$15 billion. These losses are long-term, compounding, and unsustainable. Unlike other providers, who 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. This is due to the sharp decline in occupancy rate. Many providers are reporting declines in admissions of 75% compared to the same period in 2019.



Secretary Azar, we know that the Administration is working hard to provide relief to all providers who suffered COVID losses. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. However, the financial struggles of assisted living facilities due to the lengthy delays in relief are now dire. Any assistance that you can provide in expediting relief to assisted living providers would be greatly appreciated. These caregivers are doing their utmost to care and protect our nation's most vulnerable population from this terrible virus.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum