



November 18, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman, Appropriations Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate

Dear Senators Shelby, Leahy, Blunt, and Murray:

Argentum is the largest national association representing assisted living, independent living, memory care, and continuing care retirement communities. These communities offer choice, dignity, security, and comfort in the final years of life, and are the home to over 2 million of our nation's most vulnerable populations to the COVID virus. In many of these communities, the average age is 85 and a majority suffer from chronic conditions and comorbidities. Despite that, assisted living facilities have received woefully little in federal relief. Many have not been provided any financial relief to date. **Urgent appropriation dollars are needed to combat the significant increase in COVID-19 spread and to keep vulnerable senior populations safe.**

Unlike other providers, the financial losses to assisted living communities are compounding due to significantly decreased occupancy rates and increased PPE needs. For PPE alone, upfront COVID expenses exceed \$11 billion for testing, staffing and personal protective equipment. This includes the costs of gowns, gloves, masks, face shields, goggles, respirators, cleaning supplies, monitors, additional staff, hero pay and testing. Testing is critical and expenses are mounting. Current rapid-response tests provided by the federal government are significantly short of the need. Facilities are purchasing their own tests often at a cost of \$75 - \$100 each. Additionally, many states mandate regular PCR tests. **Simply put, there is not an adequate supply of tests coming from the federal government to effectively prevent the spread of COVID in senior congregate communities. Resources to purchase tests are needed immediately.**

Other unsustainable losses for assisted living facilities include \$15 billion in lost occupancy rates. Unfortunately, despite caring for the same vulnerable populations, assisted living communities are on track to receive only a small fraction of the relief provided to nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities.

Due to these massive financial losses, nearly 40% of operators are anticipating potential closures if sufficient relief is not available, based on a recent survey. Closures would mean that vulnerable seniors would lose both their caregiver and their home.



The situation is dire. **We ask that Congress ensure appropriate funding of up to \$5 billion in funding to ensure adequate testing, and PPE needs are met to protect those most vulnerable and the staff that care for them. Additionally, we would ask the Committee either in the end of year budget or the next COVID-19 package to include language insuring resources be made available to all long-term care providers including assisted living, memory care, and continuing care communities.** To win the COVID-19 battle, senior living communities must have the tools and resources needed to protect our nation's most vulnerable populations.

For more information, please contact Paul Williams at pwilliams@argentum.org or Dan Samson at dsamson@argentum.org.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum

CC: Senator Mitch McConnell
Senator Lamar Alexander
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Lindsey Graham
Senator Jerry Moran
Senator John Hoeven
Senator John Boozman
Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Senator John Kennedy
Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith
Senator Steve Daines
Senator Marco Rubio
Senator James Lankford
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Richard Durbin
Senator Jack Reed
Senator Jon Tester
Senator Tom Udall
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Jeff Merkley
Senator Christopher Coons
Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Chris Murphy
Senator Joe Manchin
Senator Chris Van Hollen