



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Thursday, November 12, 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,

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. To combat the spread of the virus, senior living operators have taken extraordinary measures and suffered billions of dollars in financial loss. Senior living communities are not nursing homes, but care for and protect the same vulnerable populations.

We are encouraged by the Administration's recent announcement to prioritize and deliver rapid response antigen tests to assisted 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 also greatly appreciated. As these communities continue to sustain massive financial losses, it is important to note that they care for the same vulnerable populations as other long-term care facilities (such as skilled nursing facilities) yet have received only a fraction of federal relief.

As the Administration works toward its goal of rapid-testing and vaccination to abate the pandemic in senior communities, please know that these communities are with you. Senior living facilities will 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.

Senior living communities currently estimate COVID-related losses to total \$15 billion. These losses are long-term, compounding, and unsustainable. 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 its 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. In fact, assisted living occupancy fell to a record low in the second quarter of 2020.

Such devastating losses are not sustainable and will dramatically impede the ability of these facilities to administer long-term rapid-testing and vaccinations. Therefore, senior living communities must have the financial resources to procure tests and acquire the requisite PPE and staff to effectively implement widescale testing. We urge you to allocate unused Provider Relief Fund monies, immediately, to provide assisted living communities with much needed support.

Our nation's most vulnerable populations and those who care for them must be prioritized. We greatly appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



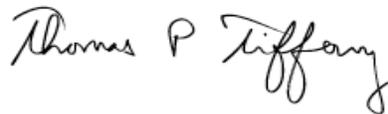
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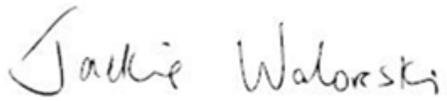
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