



March 18, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
1401 Constitution Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Becerra,

On behalf of Argentum, the leading national, non-profit association representing over 70 percent of professionally managed senior living communities and the nearly two million seniors in their care, we urge you to prioritize older Americans in assisted living, Alzheimer's/memory care, and other senior congregate care settings in the administration's ongoing COVID-19 response efforts. These caregivers have been woefully left behind in federal relief efforts.

For nearly a year, our member operators and their senior living staff have been serving on the front lines of this pandemic, working tirelessly and compassionately to keep safe and engaged the two million residents who call senior living home and almost one million employees who care for them. As you know, this population is among the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of the virus, with nearly 80 percent of all COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. having occurred in people over the age of 65, and for older adults living in senior living communities—whose average age is 85—the risk is even higher. Despite this, **assisted living caregivers have received little to no federal relief**. Now, over half are operating at a loss, and 56% report that closures are imminent.

Assisted living providers have valiantly fought this past year to keep their residents safe. As a result, these caregivers have suffered over \$15 billion in losses due to PPE, testing, cleaning, staffing needs and heroes pay, as well as record-low occupancy rates. Despite these great costs, to date, assisted living caregivers have received only about \$1 billion in relief from the Provider Relief Fund (PRF), which represents less than 1 percent of the overall fund. Many are still waiting for relief, and others have been inexplicably denied. These losses are devastating and unsustainable. Now their situation is dire.

Mr. Secretary, these caregivers must be urgently prioritized for distributions from the remaining amounts in the PRF. As their financial resources are exhausted, providers will have no other choice than to close their doors. If communities close, seniors will lose their homes, caregivers will lose jobs, and the financial burden will fall on American taxpayers. Argentum asks for your help in protecting our nation's most vulnerable population from this terrible pandemic. We ask that you prioritize and target \$5 billion in funding from the PRF for assisted living providers. We would love to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this critical matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [jbalda@argentum.org](mailto:jbalda@argentum.org).

Sincerely,

James Balda  
President & CEO  
Argentum