



March 30, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As your administration embarks on its ambitious Build Back Better program to address the nation's infrastructure needs, we urge you to consider the rapidly growing needs of long-term care providers, and specifically senior living facilities. These facilities presently care for nearly two million vulnerable older Americans across assisted living, memory/Alzheimer's care, and other senior congregate care settings. As our nation ages, demand for care services will grow exponentially, and it is critical that investments are made now to adequately prepare for the increasing care needs of our seniors.

Argentum is the leading national association representing senior living providers, which offer choice, dignity, security, and comfort in the final years of life. These facilities have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year, undertaking extraordinary measures to protect their vulnerable residents, whose average age is 85, and caregiver staff—altogether projected at more than \$15 billion in COVID-19 related expenses and losses. Unfortunately, providers and caregivers have received insufficient support, which has caused significant financial strain and led many providers to consider near-term closing of facilities, while otherwise leaving facilities ill-equipped to invest in the growing need for long-term services and supports.

By age 65, there is a 52% chance that a person will need long-term care during his or her lifetime, including potentially requiring assistance with activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, or toileting. This is particularly concerning as by the end of the decade, all members of the "Baby Boomer" generation will have reached age 65, adding an additional 20 million more Americans age 65 or older this decade alone, and by 2060 nearly 95 million Americans will be age 65 or older, including nearly 20 million age 85 or older. This aging population, especially those over 85 who are most in need of long-term care, is expected to result in a tripling of long-term care expenditures, projected to climb to \$346 billion annually in 2040.

National investments in long-term infrastructure are critically needed to address this rapidly aging population. Beyond the basic needs for facilities and caregiving staff, there will need to be significant investments in infection prevention and control, air quality and filtration, and connectivity to combat the devastating impact of social isolation. Specifically, we strongly recommend national investments in systems to prevent infectious diseases, such as air quality and HVAC system upgrades to reduce airborne transmission of viruses, upgrades of water purification systems, and infrared/UVL systems. A national infrastructure program must also make investments in capital projects for facilities to expand open and outdoor spaces to support social distancing and visitation, physical plant alterations to support cohorting, and installation of touchless devices and fixtures to reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

We appreciate the attention on investments in broadband technology that would improve the quality of life for seniors, such as expanded access to wireless infrastructure to better leverage telehealth capabilities. Additional technological upgrades are recommended for resident safety systems for surveillance tracking, robotics and internet enabled devices to reduce contagion spread, enhanced visitor management technology to improve wellness screening, along with technological investments



to help protecting seniors' sensitive information through electronic health records (EHRs) and Personal health records (PHRs), data management and information security systems, and cybersecurity measures. Investments could either be made directly or by providing access to capital and grants through low-interest loans, grants, and tax-deductions to ensure the housing needs of tomorrow can be met.

Ultimately, these investments will not be enough if providers are not able to weather the financial impact of the pandemic. Relief to date has been insufficient for senior living providers, and as a result, more than half of operators say they may need to close communities in the coming months. The American Rescue Plan Act did not include any dedicated support for senior congregate care settings, and the Provider Relief Fund has been inadequate in addressing the \$15 billion in unprecedented expenses and losses—less than \$3 billion has even been allocated. If facilities are forced to close, seniors will lose their homes, caregivers will lose jobs, the financial burden will fall on taxpayers, and the enormous challenge of meeting the growing care needs of our seniors will become even more daunting.

On behalf of our members, we appreciate your attention to the critical needs of seniors and urge your administration to prioritize the needs of senior living facilities in the forthcoming infrastructure package. It's imperative that providers not only have access to resources that will allow them to prepare for the rapidly growing long-term infrastructure needs of our aging society, but also the immediate financial relief to address the unprecedented expenses and losses associated with caring for this most vulnerable population to COVID-19.

If you have any questions about the immediate or long-term needs of our member communities, please do not hesitate to contact me at jbalda@argentum.org.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum