

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,

We appreciate the robust efforts taken by the Biden Administration to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Administration and your agency continue this work, we ask that you provide a fair and equitable allocation of remaining Provider Relief Fund (PRF) resources to the frontline caregivers and operators that have received comparatively little relief to date, such as assisted living providers, Alzheimer's/memory care centers, and senior congregate care facilities. These facilities care for nearly two million vulnerable seniors and have received a more limited amount of federal aid from the PRF.

Data illustrates that seniors are the most at-risk population for death and serious illness from COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 80.9 percent of all COVID-19 deaths have occurred in people aged 65 and older. Residents of assisted living facilities are particularly at risk, because they, on average, are aged 85, suffer from multiple chronic conditions, and require assistance with daily living activities (such as eating, bathing, dressing, and taking medications), which cannot be socially distanced. Fortunately, vaccinations are now helping to keep residents and caregivers safe and show great promise to getting back to a new normal.

However, many facilities continue to struggle with immense financial burdens. Since the beginning of the public health emergency (PHE), senior living and senior support providers have incurred billions in expenses or losses related to the acquisition of additional personal protective equipment (PPE) and other infection prevention and control supplies, as well as additional support for their workforce. The financial strain they are experiencing is further exacerbated by lost revenue due to record-low occupancy rates as the move-in of new residents was slowed, and in many cases halted, due to the PHE; these losses are long-term, compounding, and unsustainable.

We continue to hear from providers in our respective states, that without additional financial relief, many will not be able to sustain operations. For the senior residents of these communities, this could mean losing their caregiver and their home. An analysis by your agency on the funds from the PRF dispersed to skilled nursing facilities versus assisted living facilities is warranted considering they serve a similar vulnerable population. It is estimated that approximately \$23 billion remains in the PRF and a proportional allocation of funds to these senior care facilities would signal that this Administration remains dedicated to helping our nation's seniors and their families.

We will work with you to ensure that these essential facilities that serve our nation's most vulnerable population receive the resources they need to continue to protect their residents and staff. Immediate targeted financial relief that equitably provides resources to these caregivers as other comparable long-term care providers is necessary. These resources will help offset the continued expenses for PPE, staffing, infection prevention and control, vaccine administration, and testing.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Senator Kyrsten Sinema

Senator Susan M. Collins