



February 17, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

America's seniors and their caregivers are counting on your leadership. Time and again, assisted living providers have been left behind in federal COVID-19 relief efforts, despite caring for the most at-risk population to this deadly virus and its variants. Now, with remaining federal support nearly exhausted, and the majority of assisted living caregivers operating at a loss, we call on Congress to target \$10 billion in new relief or existing relief for these caregivers. Additionally, we ask Congress to pass common-sense solutions to address the unprecedented workforce crisis facing long-term care providers.

Argentum, the leading national non-profit association representing more than 70 percent of the nation's assisted living, memory/Alzheimer's care, and independent living facilities, and our 33 State Partner affiliated associations, write with this urgent need. Our members provide the homes and care for nearly two million older Americans—roughly one in four older Americans who need assistance with daily living. Despite caring for the population most vulnerable to COVID-19 and six COVID relief bills totaling \$6 trillion, assisted living providers remain the only frontline caregivers with disproportionate access to relief. More than \$30 billion in losses have been incurred, yet despite broad bipartisan support in Congress for targeting relief to these frontline caregivers, less than 5% of these losses have been reimbursed—meanwhile other providers have had nearly all of their expenses and losses offset. As a result of receiving very little help, many assisted living caregivers have had to make the agonizing decision to close their doors and force seniors from their homes and caregivers.

Along with this financial crisis, the industry is also facing a daunting workforce crisis. During the first 20 months of the pandemic, the senior living industry lost more than 100,000 workers, resulting in 96% of communities facing staff shortages and 61% concerned that the staffing shortages might force them to close. The challenge is not only in finding enough caregivers to meet current needs, but long term to meet the anticipated demand for care in the coming years. Every day, there are 10,000 people turning age 65 in this country, and estimates are that up to 70% will need some form of care in their lifetimes. We are deeply concerned that if we don't act now, there simply will not be enough caregivers to meet the needs of the tens of millions of seniors who will need help in the coming decades.

Thankfully, bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the House by Representatives Lori Trahan (MA-3) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-1) that would address some of these challenges. **H.R. 6530, the SENIOR Act**, would provide \$10 billion in funding to assisted living caregivers that



demonstrate significant and uncompensated COVID-19 related losses due to direct senior care, similar to the Provider Relief Fund (PRF). And the legislation increases the investment in existing HHS workforce development programs through \$1.25 billion in new four-year grants to help develop a geriatric care workforce. We strongly support this bill and urge Congress to promptly advance it for President Biden's consideration.

We also strongly support bipartisan legislation in both the House and Senate, **H.R. 6161 and S. 3625, the Employee Retention Tax Credit Reinstatement Act**. The ERTC had been a lifeline for senior living providers to be able to retain critical frontline caregivers, despite their financial challenges during the pandemic, by providing up to \$26,000 in refundable credits per employee—helping address both the financial and workforce crises. This crucial program was due to run through this past December, but incredibly, it was retroactively terminated back to the end of the third quarter of 2021, leaving many providers to face a tax increase for a credit that will need to be forfeited. These bipartisan bills would reinstate the ERTC through the end of 2021 to alleviate the retroactive tax increase.

While the Omicron variant may be trending downward in much of the country, the pandemic is far from over for our nation's seniors who remain alarmingly at risk of this virus. Despite very high vaccination rates (more than 90% of residents vaccinated), more than two-thirds of breakthrough hospitalizations are occurring in those who are age 65 and older, and 87% of all breakthrough deaths occurred among individuals over age 65. We must continue doing everything possible to protect this population.

We urge Congress to include \$10 billion in targeted federal financial relief for senior living providers, as proposed in the SENIOR Act, and to pass common-sense investments in solving the long-term workforce shortage crisis, such as the provisions in the SENIOR Act and the Employee Retention Tax Credit Reinstatement Act. We thank you for your leadership and urge your attention toward addressing these two crises.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum



Co-signed:

Argentum New York
Arizona Assisted Living Federation of America
Arkansas Residential Assisted Living Association
Assisted Living Assn of Alabama
California Assisted Living Assn
Connecticut Assisted Living Assn
Florida Senior Living Association
GSLA-Georgia Senior Living Association
Health Care Assn of New Jersey
Indiana Assisted Living Association
Iowa Assisted Living Association
Kentucky Senior Living Association
LeadingAge Colorado
LeadingAge Illinois
LeadingAge Minnesota
Lifespan Network
Louisiana Assisted Living Association
Massachusetts Assisted Living Assn
Michigan Assisted Living Assn
Missouri Assisted Living Assn
Montana Health Care Assn
New Hampshire Assn of Residential Care Homes
North Carolina Assisted Living Assn
Ohio Assisted Living Association
Oklahoma Assisted Living Association
Oregon Health Care Association
Pennsylvania Assisted Living Association
Rhode Island Assisted Living Assn
Texas Assisted Living Association
Utah Assisted Living Association
Virginia Assisted Living Association
Washington Health Care Association
Wisconsin Assisted Living Assn