



April 1, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. 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:

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over for America's seniors and caregivers. As supplemental relief measures are considered, we remind you that despite \$6 trillion spent over six major pandemic relief packages, seniors and their assisted living caregivers have been consistently left behind and remain at significant risk of this virus. We implore you to allocate targeted financial relief for providers to overcome their expenses and losses and to renew a public-private partnership on vaccine and booster administration to help get "shots in arms."

We are writing on behalf of the members of Argentum, the leading national non-profit association representing over 70 percent of the nation's assisted living, memory/Alzheimer's care, and independent living facilities. Roughly one in four older Americans who depend on help with their daily needs—from eating and bathing, to walking and taking medications—reside in these communities. They have borne the greatest risk of the virus since the beginning of this pandemic, and despite widespread vaccination (resident vaccination rates of over 95% and staff vaccination rates of over 85%), they remain at significant risk.

More than two-thirds of breakthrough hospitalizations have occurred in those who are age 65 and older, and even more troubling is that 87% of all breakthrough deaths occurred among individuals over age 65. Booster doses are an essential part of counteracting the waning immunity of the vaccines, but it will take more than simply adjusting eligibility of additional doses to protect this largely non-ambulatory population; it will take a significant investment in resources. Last year's Pharmacy Partnership Program offers a model for doing so, which helped achieve such high vaccination rates. Unfortunately, this was not renewed for boosters, putting unnecessary strain on already stretched clinical staff to vaccinate their residents.

We are also again calling on a dedicated relief fund for assisted living providers. These frontline caregivers have received an appallingly low amount of relief compared to other providers, despite providing 24/7 direct care for those most at-risk of the virus. Altogether, these expenses and losses have totaled more than \$30 billion while receiving just a small fraction of the relief that other providers have received. And for many, the current Phase 4 reimburses less than a quarter of their losses, at a time when losses increased by 300%. As this crisis worsens, every day more and more providers are faced with the agonizing decision to shutter their doors and displace frail seniors from their homes, threatening the 24/7 care they so critically need.



As negotiations continue over additional relief efforts, we are specifically asking for your help in supporting:

1. **Targeted relief for assisted living caregivers.** This could be accomplished by repurposing existing funding (of which the administration believes roughly \$300 billion is unspent) and targeting a portion of these funds exclusively for senior living caregivers.
2. **Direct support to help administer booster doses to senior living residents.** The FDA has underscored the importance of Americans ages 50 and older to receive a second round of boosters. It is imperative that Congress ensure our most vulnerable can receive these life-saving shots by authorizing a partnership program to provide on-site clinics at these facilities.

We cannot stress enough that the pandemic is not over for America's seniors, particularly the nearly two million who reside in senior living facilities. In fact, the Omicron variant only exacerbated many of the challenges that caregivers were already experiencing in the losses and lack of support for vaccines, boosters, tests, and other resources, at the same time that staffing shortages have grown significantly more dire.

Senior living residents and their caregivers have never received adequate support to meet the unprecedented challenges they face from this virus. We simply cannot have yet another relief package—the seventh such package—to once again leave these seniors and caregivers behind.

We are asking you: Please keep your commitment to America's seniors and their caregivers and support them in this package.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum