



May 29, 2026

The Honorable Rick Scott
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Aging
G16 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Aging
G16 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Gillibrand:

On behalf of Argentum, the leading national association representing senior living communities and the older adults and families they serve, I appreciate your holding the May 20, 2026 hearing, *Preventing Falls, Preserving Independence: Technology, Community Programs, and Innovation in Senior Safety*.

The members of Argentum operate senior living communities offering assisted living, independent living, continuing care, and memory care services where nearly two million seniors reside. These communities provide seniors with a choice and dignity in care in a residential setting, as opposed to institutional facilities. Our social model promotes abundant social and educational activities, restaurant-like nutritious meals, and strong resident engagement.

Assisted living communities across the country are committed to helping residents lead meaningful and independent lives in environments that promote safety. Falls prevention is central to that mission. Our approach prioritizes reducing injurious falls while supporting residents' ability to make informed choices about their daily lives. Maintaining mobility and independence is itself a critical component of health and well-being.

Falls among older adults represent one of the most significant threats to health and independence, but are not fully preventable. Each year, more than one in four adults age 65 and older—over 14 million individuals—experience a fall, making falls the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries in this population. The consequences are substantial: approximately 37 percent of falls result in injuries requiring medical treatment or activity restriction, contributing to an estimated nine million injuries annually.

These incidents place enormous strain on the healthcare system. Falls lead to roughly 3 million emergency department visits and 1 million hospitalizations each year, and total medical costs for nonfatal falls alone reached approximately \$80 billion annually. In the most severe cases, falls account for tens of thousands of deaths each year and represent the leading cause of injury-related death among older adults. Importantly, falls are not an inevitable consequence of aging. Evidence shows that targeted prevention strategies can significantly reduce falls and injurious outcomes, with interventions that address environmental and clinical risk factors able to reduce falls by roughly 10 to 20 percent.

One of the most effective ways to reduce fall risk is through thoughtful design. Assisted living communities are intentionally designed to promote ease of navigation and mobility. This

includes clearly identifiable destinations, widened walkways, and handrails throughout hallways—features that allow residents to move confidently and safely within their environment. These design choices reflect a broader philosophy: safety should be built into the environment rather than imposed through restrictive interventions. When residents feel comfortable navigating their surroundings, they are more likely to remain active, and sustained activity is essential to preventing functional decline that can increase fall risk.

Falls are rarely the result of a single factor; they stem from a complex interplay of physical, cognitive, environmental, and behavioral elements. Effective prevention therefore requires a comprehensive, individualized approach. Senior living communities employ falls prevention programs that emphasize staff training to recognize functional mobility as an asset. Too often, residents who are able to ambulate independently are viewed as higher risk, leading to unnecessary use of wheelchairs or other supports that can inadvertently reduce strength, mobility, and balance, and unintentionally increase the risk of falls. Instead, assisted living communities train staff to support and encourage safe mobility as a key component of prevention. Maintaining independence in movement is essential to preserving both physical health and quality of life.

While some falls are unavoidable, the goal is to minimize injury and learn from every incident. Assisted living communities have adopted robust quality improvement processes that include tracking all incidents, near-misses, and contributing factors. Incident data can be analyzed to identify patterns, risk factors, and opportunities for intervention. These insights inform individualized care plans and guide environmental modifications, such as the addition of cushioned landing zones or improved lighting. A key benefit is access to comprehensive dashboards that track fall-related events and benchmark performance against national standards. This data-driven approach supports continuous improvement and allows providers to implement evidence-based practices more effectively.

Technology has an important role to play in fall prevention, but it must be implemented carefully and thoughtfully. Wearable devices, monitoring tools, and sensors can provide valuable real-time data and enhance rapid response capabilities; however it is imperative that technology solutions be person-centered and voluntary. Some residents may have negative reactions to interventions such as bed and chair alarms, and express concerns about false alarms, embarrassment, staff fatigue, and perceived restrictions on personal freedom. Fall prevention strategies are most effective when they are individualized, responsive to resident preferences, and integrated into broader care planning.

As this Committee has recognized, assisted living communities play a vital role not only in providing care but also in improving overall quality of life for older adults. Residents consistently report high levels of satisfaction, safety, and improved well-being in these settings. Fall prevention must be considered within this broader context. Policies that overly prioritize risk elimination at the expense of independence can unintentionally diminish quality of life. Residents value the ability to make choices—even those that carry minor risks—because those choices are fundamental to maintaining dignity and autonomy.



To strengthen fall prevention efforts nationwide, we respectfully offer several considerations for policymakers:

- Support person-centered care models that balance safety with independence and choice.
- Encourage innovation in design and technology, while ensuring that solutions remain responsive to resident preferences.
- Promote workforce training that emphasizes mobility, functional independence, and individualized care planning.
- Expand access to data-driven quality improvement tools and foster partnerships that leverage analytics to improve outcomes.
- Recognize assisted living as a critical component of the long-term care continuum, capable of delivering high-quality, cost-effective care while enhancing quality of life.

Falls prevention is not simply about reducing incidents—it is about enabling older adults to live with purpose, dignity, and independence. By combining thoughtful design, appropriate use of technology, individualized care, and data-driven innovation, assisted living communities are making meaningful progress toward that goal. For further consideration on how senior living operators and partners are addressing this critical issue, please refer to the testimonials attached to our testimony.

We appreciate the Committee's leadership on this issue and look forward to working together to advance policies that protect seniors while preserving the independence that defines their quality of life. Please contact my office with any questions.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum

Addendum 1: Submission by Merrill Gardens

Merrill Gardens is committed to supporting our residents' dignity, independence, and overall well-being, while maintaining a strong focus on safety. We believe resident choice and autonomy are fundamental to quality of life. However, we also recognize that falls remain a significant and persistent risk for older adults. National data indicate that approximately one in five falls results in serious injury, such as a fracture or traumatic brain injury, underscoring the importance of proactive prevention efforts.

Unfortunately, falls cannot be prevented. However, research demonstrates that comprehensive, systematic fall reduction programs can meaningfully reduce risk and improve outcomes. At Merrill Gardens, this includes ongoing assessment to identify individuals at elevated risk and the development of personalized care strategies designed to mitigate those risks.

One of the key challenges is that falls are driven by many factors. Risk increases as factors such as mobility limitations, medication changes, environmental conditions, and changes in health accumulate. By working to proactively identify and address these factors, we aim to reduce the overall risk and better support residents in maintaining their independence.

To further enhance resident safety, Merrill Gardens has partnered with organizations offering advanced, AI-enabled fall detection technology. These tools help identify potential environmental and health-related risks, provide alerts that allow caregivers to respond more quickly to resident needs, and generate insights that can be used to inform targeted interventions to help reduce the risk of serious fall-related injuries.

Addendum 2: Submission by ALG Senior

Our primary objective is to facilitate residents in leading meaningful and autonomous lives, even when engaging in activities that involve minor risks. As providers in this sector, it is incumbent upon us to design and maintain facilities that inherently promote safety while supporting informed decision-making and residents' independence. To this end, our architectural planning emphasizes features that enhance ease of movement and navigation; for example, our buildings incorporate visibly identifiable destinations and are equipped with hallways featuring handrails and widened pathways that enhance safety and accessibility.

The use of wearable devices has gained popularity as a measure to reduce falls and improve resident safety. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that a significant proportion of residents experience discomfort with wearable technology or the presence of surveillance cameras within their personal spaces. Respect for residents' independence requires a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions and feelings regarding alarms and wearable devices. Empirical evidence indicates that older adults often report negative experiences with bed and chair alarms, especially when used over extended periods. Such experiences are frequently attributed to issues like frequent false alarms, feelings of embarrassment, caregiver fatigue, and perceived restrictions on personal freedom. Consequently, alarms should be

positioned as temporary, tailored interventions rather than adopting a universal, one-size-fits-all approach.

Our Falls Prevention program is predicated on a thorough understanding of the multifaceted causes of falls and is designed to implement individualized intervention strategies. This approach seeks to address and change the common perception among staff that residents who can walk independently pose a liability. Such misconceptions can lead to unnecessary wheelchair dependency and over-reliance on assistance, which may inadvertently contribute to decreased mobility and increased fall risk. Instead, staff training emphasizes recognizing functional mobility as a critical component of risk management and fall prevention.

While it is acknowledged that some falls may be unavoidable due to the complex interplay of factors inherent in aging, our overarching goal is not the elimination of all falls but rather the reduction of injurious falls to a minimum. Our focus is on rapid incident response, creating safer environmental conditions—such as cushioned landing zones—and fostering strategic partnerships, notably with our insurance provider, which constitutes an integral element of our safety framework. After every incident, including near-misses and falls, the clinical team logs incident details, which are then analyzed by our insurance provider's data analytics team. The insights gained facilitate evidence-based recommendations for personalized care plans and suggest environmental modifications intended to improve safety outcomes.

A notable advantage of this collaborative partnership is access to a comprehensive falls incident dashboard. This specialized tool tracks all fall-related events and benchmarks them against national and internal standards, thereby informing continuous quality improvement initiatives. While integrating an insurance provider into fall prevention initiatives may seem unconventional, this collaboration enhances the program's effectiveness by leveraging extensive data analysis and specialized expertise, both essential for implementing evidence-driven, holistic fall prevention strategies.

Addendum 3: Submission by SafelyYou

Empowering Proactive Care and Proven Safety

Falls remain one of the highest and most preventable cost drivers in senior living. Leaders estimate fall-related costs at \$5,000–\$19,999 per incident, aligning with national evidence. The financial burden comes not just from the event, but from the downstream impact: workflow disruption, supervision needs, family communication, and potential move-outs.

SafelyYou provides senior living operators with a non-wearable, ambient artificial intelligence platform designed to transition daily operations from reactive care to proactive risk mitigation. Deployed via subtle, ceiling-mounted sensors, SafelyYou Safety AI™ continuously checks resident rooms to automatically detect on-the-ground events with over 99% accuracy.

This technology functions passively without needing wearable devices, lanyards, or active staff intervention. When an incident occurs, a short video clip spanning ten minutes before and after the event is captured, encrypted, and routed via phone, text, and email to on-site care teams.

By reviewing the actual event on video, care teams can unearth specific root causes—such as subtle shifts in gait, unsafe furniture layouts, or a hidden history of falls. Staff then collaborate with remote clinical experts during regular "Fall Huddles" to update care plans and implement precise, person-centered modifications.

Validated Safety and Financial Outcomes

SafelyYou produces statistically validated outcomes across hundreds of communities:

- **Significant fall reduction:** 45% reduction in total resident population level fall rates within one year. Community-wide fall burden declined steadily over time across all monitored residents. And for residents at highest risk, results accelerate quickly: 70% fewer falls in 60-days, 82% fewer falls in 90-days, and up to 96% reduction within one year.
- **80% ER Avoidance:** Clear video evidence allows care teams to prioritize immediate care on-site and quickly triage minor, self-recovered "silent falls," preventing unnecessary hospital transfers.
- **Extended Length of Stay (LOS):** Keeping seniors stabilized in their rooms directly helps operators protect Net Operating Income (NOI). Communities utilizing SafelyYou extend a resident's average length of stay by approximately 175 days, effectively delaying move-outs and improving resident retention.

Real-World Success: Assisted Living Facility in Michigan

The profound impact of SafelyYou Safety AI is illustrated by a veteran with Parkinson's disease who joined a Michigan assisted living community in October 2025. Facing severe mobility challenges, the resident suffered an alarming 54 fall events over a four-month period. The care team utilized SafelyYou's video event reviews to understand the exact root causes of these frequent occurrences and make adjustments to this resident's care. As a direct result of these data-driven care adaptations, the resident achieved a monumental turnaround, moving from a cycle of constant falling to zero falls for a consecutive six-week period.

This turnaround was driven by a series of highly targeted, person-centered clinical interventions based on SafelyYou's insights. The community executed environmental room modifications, initiated physical therapy tailored to balance and core strengthening, provided dedicated assistance during meal times, and established personalized toileting schedules backed by increased staff rounding frequency. Furthermore, staff received training on the optimal placement of assistive devices, social and activity engagement was intentionally increased during vulnerable evening hours, and headphones were introduced to minimize environmental distractions. Critically, reviewing the video footage also empowered clinicians to make four distinct medication adjustments.

"We truly value the profound insight SafelyYou delivers regarding our residents' daily lives. The knowledge we gain from reviewing the video events empowers our team to provide a higher standard of person-centered care," the community's Wellness Director shared.