



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3605

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

We write to thank you and your team for your work in implementing the CARES Act and to offer some thoughts for consideration as your agency continues its work to provide financial support for health care providers as we face the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the announcement that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released on April 22, 2020, including a roadmap for how the next rounds of the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund (PHSSEF) will be distributed. As you are considering providers to include in the “additional allocations” category along with skilled nursing facilities, dentists, and providers that solely take Medicaid, we would like to remind you of the challenges additional providers caring for vulnerable aging populations face while confronting the reality of COVID-19.

Millions of American seniors reside in nursing homes, skilled nursing centers, senior living communities, independent living, assisted living, memory care, and continuing care retirement communities and are disproportionately at risk of experiencing severe cases of COVID-19. These facilities provide important care to vulnerable individuals, who are, on average, over the age of 85 and suffering from multiple comorbidities. Providers in these facilities are facing unique challenges as they support the medical needs of their aging residents, especially those who have chronic health conditions. Even when our country is not facing a pandemic, these facilities face staffing difficulties, and they are particularly hard pressed as their nursing and other professionals have become infected with COVID-19. Additionally, they are having difficulty obtaining basic medical supplies, including masks, gowns, and hand sanitizer.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) April 18 COVIDView surveillance summary, the overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 29.2 per 100,000, whereas the rate for individuals over 65 years of age is 95.5 per 100,000. While we do

not yet have federal data on nursing homes, long-term-care facilities, and senior living operations and COVID-19, a Kaiser Family Foundation report released on April 23, 2020 found that over 10,000 long-term-care facility residents and staff have died due to COVID-19 in the 23 states reporting this data.¹

The providers in nursing homes, skilled nursing centers, senior living communities, independent living, assisted living, memory care, and continuing care retirement communities are on the front lines of providing critical health care services for these vulnerable individuals during normal times, but especially during a pandemic. These facilities are deserving of support to aid them in their COVID-19 response to ensure the health and safety of their residents and their medical staff.

We respectfully request that you allow these facilities to qualify for a portion of the PHSSEF grant funding that was provided by both the CARES Act and the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. These seniors and their care providers are on the front line and need to see assistance quickly materialize from this program.

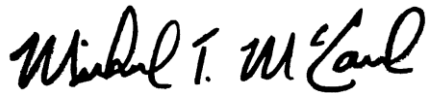
Sincerely,



Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



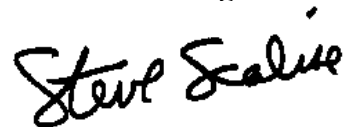
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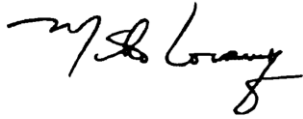


Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress

¹ Priya Chidambaram, *State Reporting of Cases and Deaths Due to COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities* (April 23, 2020), accessed at <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/state-reporting-of-cases-and-deaths-due-to-covid-19-in-long-term-care-facilities/>



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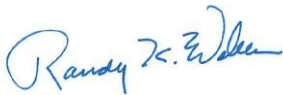
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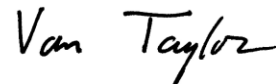
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