

GERALD E. CONNOLLY  
11TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA  
2238 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-1492

FAIRFAX OFFICE:  
4115 ANNANDALE ROAD  
SUITE 103  
ANNANDALE, VA 22003  
(703) 256-3071

PRINCE WILLIAM OFFICE:  
2241-D TACKETT'S MILL DRIVE  
WOODBIDGE, VA 22192  
(571) 408-4407

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-4611**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
CHAIRMAN, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND CONSUMER POLICY  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND INTERNATIONAL  
TERRORISM  
ASIA, THE PACIFIC, AND NONPROLIFERATION

July 10, 2020

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

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Gaynor:

As we continue our work responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, I write to request immediate assistance for assisted living facilities. Residents and employees of assisted living facilities are on the frontlines of this pandemic and additional funding and support is necessary to protect them from COVID-19 outbreaks.

There are more than 42,000 assisted living facilities in the U.S., serving more than one million people. Assisted living provides a combination of housing, personal care services, social enrichment, and health care, primarily to older adults who need some assistance while promoting maximum independence. Although assisted living facilities are not medical facilities, there are health care components such as, assistance with daily activities, medication administration, and coordinating with health care providers.

While 0.6 percent of the U.S. population lives in nursing homes or assisted living facilities, 42 percent of all deaths from COVID-19 have occurred among residents of these facilities. While much attention has focused on the outbreaks in nursing homes, there has also been an alarming number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in assisted living facilities reported. As of July 7, 2020, in Virginia, there have been 77 assisted living facilities with outbreaks. Like residents of nursing homes, residents of assisted living facilities are among those most vulnerable to COVID-19, as more than half are above the age of 85, and many are living with underlying health conditions.

Those who work in assisted living communities are on the frontlines, potentially risking their health and lives, each day preventing and containing the spread of this deadly virus. Assisted living operators are dealing with workforce shortages due to sick employees and employees who must remain in isolation out of caution. They are also facing additional expenses from providing their employees with overtime and other incentive pay because of additional hours and demands.

Assisted living operators are dedicating significant resources to COVID-19 measures such as restricting communal dining, requiring additional dietary staff to administer meals in residents' rooms; securing critically needed and premium-priced personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies; testing and diagnosing COVID-19 cases; quarantining COVID-19 positive or suspected positive residents; offering enhanced, one-on-one activities and telehealth capabilities during visitor and group activities restrictions; enhanced and more frequent cleaning and disinfecting of the entire facility to help ensure the virus is contained or eliminated; and accepting COVID-19 positive residents discharged from hospitals per state requests.

Given the gravity of the situation we are facing with this deadly virus and its impact on our vulnerable community, long term care facilities, including assisted living communities, require federal funding to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19. As such, I urge the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to allocate \$5 billion in emergency relief funding for assisted living facilities from the CARES Act Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. I also request that HHS provide guidance to state governments on expanding priority testing and funding to assisted living communities. It is common for individuals with COVID-19 to be asymptomatic, so it will be critical to require testing for these facilities to contain the virus, as is required of nursing homes. However, assisted living providers require the necessary guidance and federal funding to regularly test residents, caregivers and potential visitors with expedited test results. Emergency funding will be even more crucial as these facilities begin to re-open.

Finally, I request that FEMA send two shipments of seven-day supplies of PPE to assisted living facilities, as was announced for nursing homes. A significant amount of PPE is needed in facilities with outbreaks for the protection of staff and other residents from the spread of COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that assisted living facility staff that interact with residents or clean residents' environments should wear PPE, including N95 respirators, eye protection, gloves, and gowns, yet 75 percent of assisted living providers have been unable to find sufficient PPE according to the American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assisted Living.

The price of inaction would be devastating – to our residents, to their loved ones, and to those who work in assisted living facilities who see their residents as family members. These caregivers on the frontlines have shown unparalleled commitment to those they serve in the face of adversity, and at great personal risk to their own health and their families.

We must rally around assisted living facilities like the country is now doing for nursing homes – and in the same way the public health sector has around hospitals. With a vulnerable population much like nursing homes, assisted living communities will not be able to overcome this unprecedented health crisis and protect our residents and caregivers without adequate funding and resources.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



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A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress



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Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress



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Elaine G. Luria  
Member of Congress