

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 4, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

We write to thank you for your leadership and continued efforts to provide aid to the long-term care (LTC) sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, more must be done to help LTC facilities to continue to provide quality care to their residents.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the country, the impact on nursing homes and assisted living facilities has been significant. Widespread financial challenges loom over many LTC facilities due to Medicaid underfunding and significant declines in patient census.

Prior to the pandemic, shortfalls in Medicaid funding had forced providers to operate on limited budgets and suffer net losses year after year. Now, these problems have been exacerbated due to the exploding costs of fighting the pandemic. More than 60 percent of all nursing home residents rely on Medicaid to cover their daily care, and the program pays for roughly 50 percent of LTC services in all settings.<sup>1</sup> Further, Medicaid reimbursements only cover 70 to 80 percent of the actual cost of care in a nursing home.<sup>2</sup>

Low Medicaid reimbursement rates, coupled with the financial hardships from the pandemic, threaten the viability of the entire LTC sector, particularly in rural areas. Over the last year, LTC facilities have dedicated extensive resources to fighting COVID-19. In 2020, nursing homes spent an estimated \$30 billion on PPE and additional staffing alone, and these additional costs are expected to continue in 2021 as the pandemic lingers.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, revenue has significantly declined due to fewer patients coming from the hospital as well as fewer potential residents seeking LTC. Nationally, nursing home occupancy has dropped dramatically.<sup>4</sup> This has resulted in \$11.3 billion in losses to nursing homes in 2020 and is projected to increase to \$22.6 billion in 2021.<sup>5</sup> The situation in rural markets is even worse with the census drop being more dramatic and the recovery much slower.

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<sup>1</sup> "Medicaid's Role in Nursing Home Care." KFF, 20 Jun 2017, <https://www.kff.org/infographic/medicaids-role-in-nursing-home-care/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Protect Access to Long Term Care for Vulnerable Residents." American Health Care Association, <https://www.ahcancal.org/Advocacy/IssueBriefs/Protect%20Access%20to%20Long%20Term%20Care%20IB.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Abelson, Reed. "Covid Forces Families to Rethink Nursing Home Care." The New York Times, 6 May 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/06/health/covid-nursing-homes.html>.

<sup>5</sup> "Protect Access to Long Term Care for Vulnerable Residents." American Health Care Association.

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COVID-19 and historic underfunding has real consequences on residents of LTC facilities. Most residents are older adults living with multiple underlying health conditions, and they require a high-level of specialized care. Closures leave residents displaced from their long-standing communities and often reduce their options for quality care in marginalized communities, such as rural areas. LTC providers need adequate funding so that they have the proper resources to protect residents and staff and continue delivering high-quality care.

To continue to support LTC facilities across the country as they battle COVID-19, we ask that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) dedicate \$10 billion from the Provider Relief Fund and to extend the final reporting deadline to December 2022. We also encourage you to ensure that at least \$3 billion from the American Rescue Plan's Rural Relief Fund be dedicated to LTC facilities. This will provide aid and relief to skilled nursing facilities and assisted living and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities as they face devastating economic hardship.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward to working with you to provide care to support vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,



Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Pete Aguilar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Dan Bishop  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

/s/  
G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
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/s/  
Angie Craig  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Scott Fitzgerald  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Virginia Foxx  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark E. Green, M.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Glenn Grothman  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Fred Keller  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ron Kind  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ann M. Kuster  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David Kustoff  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Al Lawson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Blaine Luetkemeyer  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Markwayne Mullin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
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/s/  
Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John Rose  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David Rouzer  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

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Bryan Steil  
Member of Congress

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Mike Thompson  
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Tom Tiffany  
Member of Congress

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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

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Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress