

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar,

We are writing to express our support for all of our nation's deserving health care providers who will in short time begin to apply for the much-needed financial relief programs of the CARES Act, specifically the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund (PHSSEF). As you set your guidelines for this program, we request that those who care for our nation's most vulnerable not be overlooked. We are specifically referring to the millions of our nation's seniors who are cared for by the hardworking men and women who work in facilities such as nursing homes, skilled nursing centers, as well those serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition, we must not overlook those individuals who work within the senior living community, such as those working in independent living, assisted living, memory care and continuing care retirement communities.

Together, these critical providers care for millions of seniors living in the United States. During the COVID-19 emergency, these health care workers provide care for the population most susceptible to COVID-19 infection and least likely to recover. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report released on March 26, 2020 found that "[o]verall, 31% of cases, 45% of hospitalizations, 53% of ICU admissions, and 80% of deaths associated with COVID-19 were among adults aged ≥ 65 years with the highest percentage of severe outcomes among persons aged ≥ 85 years." The average age of individuals within nursing homes and residents of senior living communities is 85 years old, and are typically affected by multiple comorbidities, making them significantly more vulnerable to further complications from COVID-19 exposure.

As you know, our nursing homes and senior living facilities are experiencing serious shortages of needed staffing and protective equipment during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Significant investment is needed to stave off both of these shortages. We are hearing from providers in our respective states that they are unable to order basic medical supplies, including but not limited to protective masks, gowns, gloves, hand sanitizer, and face shields. We must ensure these supplies are flowing to the providers who are on the front lines of caring for some of our nation's most vulnerable – our seniors.

We believe that the essential providers that serve our nation's seniors within our nursing homes, skilled nursing centers, assisted living facilities, as well as those within senior living communities should be included in the category of facilities that receive allocated funds made available by Congress in the PHSSEF.

Allocating a meaningful level of support from the PHSSEF to this industry is critical to the seniors who call these facilities home as we continue to take steps to reduce COVID-19 spread and support our health care providers on the front lines.

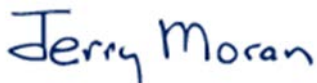
Sincerely,



James Lankford
United States Senator



Jim Inhofe
United States Senator



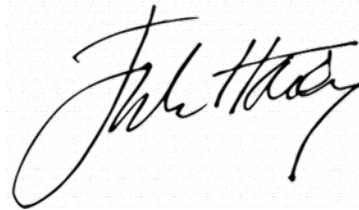
Jerry Moran
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



Kelly Loeffler
United States Senator



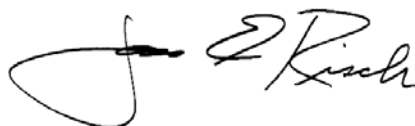
John Hoeven
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
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Kyrsten Sinema
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Mike Braun
United States Senator



Rob Portman
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David A. Purdue
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Deb Fischer
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



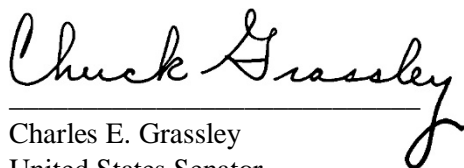
Martha McSally
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

United States Senator Tim Scott

United States Senator Pat Roberts