

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 18, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer:

We applaud your bipartisan leadership in developing the COVID-19 relief programs established by the CARES Act. As you craft the next relief package, we respectfully request that you continue your efforts to support the nation's elderly residents of long-term care facilities.

We are deeply concerned with recent media reports suggesting that some nursing facilities have been overwhelmed by the pandemic. Some providers are challenged by workforce shortages or a shortage of protective equipment, such as protective masks, gowns, gloves, hand sanitizers, or face shields. Still others struggle to meet the infection control or diagnostic testing requirements that help combat the spread of the coronavirus. Because the population of these facilities is so susceptible to the worst effects of COVID-19, it is vital for Congress to make resources available for regional or statewide strike teams to support nursing homes in crisis during this pandemic.

The social isolation experienced by millions of Americans who reside in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities across the United States is also a concern. The months-long visitation restrictions imposed by these facilities, while essential to curb the spread of COVID-19 infection, are challenging for vulnerable elderly residents and their families. After months of isolation, we've seen a move toward allowing outdoor visits, but such visits may not be an option during the coming winter months. Congress should encourage the Administration to develop guidance for long-term care facilities on how to best reduce the effects of isolation and allow for family visitation, whether that be in-person or via telecommunication (also known as televisitation).

Finally, we believe that Congress should recognize the essential nature of services provided by the nation's long-term care ombudsman program and adult protective services agencies (authorized under the Elder Justice Act). Each ombudsman's office responds to complaints from our nation's seniors within nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other long-term care facilities, while adult protective services investigate abuse and neglect in other

contexts. It is important to support both during this pandemic, as they are on the front lines in responding to complaints of abuse or neglect.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
U.S. Senate Finance Committee



Joni K. Ernst
U.S. Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senator



Thom Tillis
U.S. Senator



James Lankford
U.S. Senator



Steve Daines
U.S. Senator