



QUALITY *Life* SERVICES

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Lead, Please Lead

Dear Governor Wolf,

In times of crisis, people look to their leaders for guidance, direction, reassurance and provision. This letter is asking you to do these very things for the people of Pennsylvania and, specifically, the residents and staff of our state's skilled nursing centers.

My family and I own and operate 10 skilled nursing centers in western Pennsylvania. It is a family business that has been providing care since 1973. It has been my privilege to work with my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins and now my own children. We have been working hands-on with the frail and elderly of our communities through good times and bad, but we have never experienced anything like this current pandemic.

To put it simply, these last few weeks have both compounded and exacerbated a problem that has existed for years.

Every year of your gubernatorial term, our Medicaid funding for care of those residents unable to pay for their services has remained flat. Last year, 80% of our almost 900 patients fell into this category. We have tightened our belts each year and tried to be financially leaner and more efficient while continuing to provide competitive wages to our staff. Profit margins continued to shrink until they were at zero. Now, we are having to deal with the operational and financial uncertainties of COVID-19.

Nursing homes care for the most vulnerable of our population when it comes to COVID-19 and we are working tirelessly to meet this challenge. Personal protective equipment and other supply costs have skyrocketed and now cost 3-7x what they did just a few months ago. Retaining the amazing staff that we have gets more challenging by the day even though we have been able to keep the virus out of our buildings thus far. We are developing premium pay plans to assure staff are adequately compensated when they are needed to care for patients with this virus.

I tell you of the challenges we are facing as a company, yet, this applies to every long-term care provider across the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania is home to almost 700 nursing facilities serving around 80,000 frail and elderly residents; many are in even more dire situations than us.



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There is still time, however, for you to help our providers, workers and residents.

The federal government has provided an additional \$1.5 Billion in Medicaid funding for our state. Major statewide nursing home associations, along with labor unions, have called upon you to designate \$290 million of those dollars - along with a small increase in ongoing funding - specifically for nursing facilities so that we can combat this pandemic, meet the increased costs and protect our staff and residents.

But so far, not a single dollar has been spent and I have heard nothing from you on your intentions for the use of these funds. Is it going to sit in the Commonwealth coffers or will it be used to plug budget holes from last year?

Or, are you going to direct it for use as intended: ensuring our healthcare providers and workers can continue to do all they can to protect our most vulnerable population?

Every day, I turn on the television and hear Governors Cuomo, Murphy, Hogan, Dewine and others in our surrounding states taking decisive action and leading their citizens through this unprecedented pandemic.

Governor Wolf, the people of Pennsylvania are begging you, "Lead, Please Lead!" The safety and well-being of our vulnerable population depends on it.

Sincerely,

Steven D Tack, President / CEO