



July 31, 2020

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

Dear Governor Wolf,

As the fight to mitigate and contain the spread of COVID-19 persists across the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania's long-term care providers, including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living residences and personal care homes continue to care for and protect our most vulnerable residents.

In late June, your administration and the general assembly directed nearly \$300 million in federal CARES Act funding to long-term care, and your investment has enabled providers to care for their residents, acquire personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and maintain their operations. We could not be more grateful for your support.

Issues remain, however, and chief among them is **testing**. In early June, your Department of Health mandated universal, baseline testing for all nursing facilities, and a testing mandate for all personal care homes and assisted living communities followed shortly thereafter.

While we have advocated for testing supplies and accessibility since the COVID-19 pandemic began, this initiative does not come without a cost to our providers.

One universal, baseline test for every resident and staff member in Pennsylvania's long-term care facilities will cost approximately \$34 million. While Medicare and Medicaid cover most of the testing cost for residents, providers are being forced to absorb the remaining costs for staff members, especially as private insurance companies refuse to cover a test that they deem 'medically unnecessary'. Furthermore, many of these providers are self-insured and must pay these increased costs directly.

Simply put, even with investments from the CARES Act and the HHS Provider Relief fund, widespread testing has become an unsustainable cost, especially as providers look to implement recurring testing to reopen visitation and cohort residents.

Recent independent research by Harvard Medical School, Brown University's School of Public Health and the University of Chicago has indicated that higher community spread of COVID-19 equals a greater chance for outbreaks in our long-term care communities. As the number of positive cases continues to increase across Pennsylvania, we remain concerned these outbreaks may lead to a dramatic increase in cases in nursing homes, assisted living communities and personal care homes as well.

We urge you to allocate emergency state and federal funding to long-term care providers to support these rising testing costs. Additionally, we understand that up to \$175 million was available in Act 24

for testing in long-term care, but only \$20 million has been utilized. We would appreciate understanding why more funds are not available and how the \$20 million is to be dispersed for testing of long-term care caregivers and their residents.

Multiple states across the country have already funded testing in long-term care, including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maryland and Rhode Island. We urge Pennsylvania to join these other states to help protect our seniors.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to protect our most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,



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