



October 30, 2020

Members of the General Assembly,

As we transition past the 2020 general election and into the winter months, we're certain you are aware of the alarming number of newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania. Not since mid-October have we seen a daily case count below 1,000. And on October 27th, the commonwealth experienced the largest single-day confirmed caseload since the pandemic began. In short, we are very much experiencing the 'fall resurgence' or 'second wave' that experts have warned of since early March.

The Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA) and LeadingAge PA represent the population most vulnerable to COVID-19: senior citizens, most with comorbidities and underlying conditions, residing in nursing homes, personal care homes and assisted living communities. And since the beginning of the pandemic, we have fought fervently for the critical needs of the long-term care sector: funding, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing, staffing and liability protections.

That's why it is most concerning to our organizations that, throughout the last few weeks, you've likely heard glowing reviews and positive feedback from the Wolf Administration regarding the Regional Response Health Collaborative Program, or 'RRHCP'. Additionally, you've likely also heard the calls for additional funding, and a continuation of the program past its December 1st deadline.

Allow our organizations to set the record straight.

In late May, the RRHCP was funded with \$175 million from the CARES Act, and it was sold as an opportunity for hospital systems and academic institutions to act as intermediaries between long-term care facilities and the state, delivering staffing, emergency PPE and testing resources to the providers who needed it most. Additionally, hospitals would lend their expertise with infection control, and organize rapid 'strike teams' in the event of a COVID outbreak.

The program, however, has produced *mixed results* at best. We've heard consistent concerns from our collective members, including nursing home administrators, regarding hostile working relationships, lack of long-term care knowledge, and an unwillingness or inability to help with the critical needs of the sector: testing, staffing and PPE. Additionally, the lack of consistency throughout the state, in terms of the types of services being offered or rendered, is staggering.

For most providers, the program has simply yielded more reporting, additional paperwork, and inconsistent guidance pertaining to various state and federal requirements.

If it is the intention of the legislature to continue the RRHCP past its deadline, we respectfully request that the program be **reformed** to benefit long-term care providers. And we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate and share ways to improve the program.

We would also encourage you to reach out to the nursing homes, personal care homes and assisted living providers in your districts to hear their firsthand experiences. The Wolf Administration continues to tout overwhelmingly positive reviews from providers; we have yet to hear those same reviews from our members.

On behalf of all long-term care providers, workers, and residents in Pennsylvania, we thank you for your consideration. As always, we stand ready to work with you. And thank you for all your support thus far.

Sincerely,

Zach Shamberg
President and CEO
Pennsylvania Health Care Association

Adam Marles
President and CEO
LeadingAge PA