



October 30, 2020

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

Dear Governor Wolf,

As we transition into the winter months, Pennsylvania has experienced an alarming number of new COVID-19 cases. 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've 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, your administration has touted the Regional Response Health Collaborative Program, or 'RRHCP', as both an overwhelming success and the answer to the challenges facing long-term care in Pennsylvania.

In late May, the program was funded with \$175 million from the CARES Act, and it was sold as an opportunity for hospital systems to act as intermediaries between long-term care facilities and the state, delivering staff, 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.

For most providers (especially nursing homes), the program has simply yielded more reporting, additional paperwork, and inconsistent guidance pertaining to state and federal requirements.

If it is the intention of your administration to continue the RRHCP past its December 1st deadline, the program must 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 themselves to hear their firsthand experiences. The hospital systems continue 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.

Sincerely,

Zach Shamberg
President and CEO
Pennsylvania Health Care Association

Adam Marles
President and CEO
LeadingAge PA