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March 20, 2020

The Honorable Bob Casey
Ranking Member
Special Committee on Aging
U.S. Senate
628 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

On behalf of our 38 million members, and all older Americans nationwide, we appreciate your leadership in addressing the needs of older adults during the coronavirus outbreak by introducing the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act of 2020.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that people over 60 years and those with serious health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease are at highest risk for severe disease and death. Risk of serious illness and death increases with age, with the highest risk of death among people over the age of 80. Nursing homes and other long-term care settings are of additional concern given their congregate nature and that the residents served are typically older adults often with underlying chronic medical conditions. According to CDC, this places nursing home residents at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19.

AARP has been advocating for targeted solutions to address both the health and economic impacts of the disease. We are pleased the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act includes important policies to help support older adults, including funding for nursing home surveys to promote infection control; funding for a number of Older Americans Act (OAA) programs including home delivered meals, the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), supportive services, and elder rights protection; and funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Additionally, we appreciate the bill would authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) grants, and make medical assistance available to more people for Medicare cost-sharing during the COVID-19 emergency assistance period. These programs and services play an important role in ensuring that older adults and their caregivers have what they need to stay healthy during this pandemic.

AARP thanks you for your ongoing efforts to address the unique needs of older Americans, and we stand ready to work with you to enact the important provisions listed above. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at moreilly@aarp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Megan O'Reilly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Megan" and the last name "O'Reilly" clearly distinguishable.

Megan O'Reilly
Vice President, Federal Health and Family, Government Affairs