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April 10, 2020

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senate
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senate
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Klobuchar, Capito, and Casey:

AARP, on behalf of our 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, is pleased to endorse the Advancing Connectivity during the Coronavirus to Ensure Support for Seniors Act (ACCESS Act, S. 3517). We appreciate your bipartisan leadership and commitment to improving access to virtual visitation for nursing home residents and their families during the coronavirus public health emergency.

During this frightening time, the health and safety of people living in nursing homes, assisted living, and other residential care facilities is paramount, which is why it is so critical that they have the ability to virtually visit and communicate with their loved ones while in-person visitation is restricted. Expanding access to telehealth in nursing homes can also help ensure more efficient and effective access to care and use of nursing home staff, especially when there are greater demands and responsibilities for care.

The ACCESS Act would provide \$50 million to the Telehealth Resource Center Program to help facilitate the development of telehealth technologies for nursing homes and would require a report to Congress on ways to increase access to telehealth in nursing homes under Medicare and Medicaid during the current public health emergency. Importantly, the legislation provides grants to nursing homes to support virtual visits. The grants would be used to obtain and use technologies and services necessary to support virtual visits. These resources are important to enable more residents and families to stay connected – including via video – both to help combat social isolation and to allow families to ensure their loved ones are being well cared for.

AARP has called on Congress to do more to support virtual visitation, and the ACCESS Act is an important part of that effort. We appreciate your bipartisan leadership to expand access to virtual visitation and telehealth, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that people can virtually visit their loved ones during this stressful and difficult time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Rhonda Richards on our Government Affairs team at r-richards@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 & Family
Government Affairs