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July 20, 2020

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
U.S. House of Representatives
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schakowsky:

AARP, on behalf of our nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, appreciates your leadership in addressing the needs of nursing home residents and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing the Quality Care for Nursing Home Residents and Workers During COVID-19 Act of 2020 (H.R. 6698).

More than 56,000 Americans have already died from COVID-19 in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, and this number is rising every single day. These resident and staff deaths represent more than 40 percent of the coronavirus deaths in the country, despite nursing home residents only making up less than one percent of the American population. This is a national disgrace. Congress must act quickly to protect residents, staff, their loved ones, and the surrounding communities from this disease.

Your legislation includes important policies to help address the crisis in our nation's nursing homes, including regular testing for nursing home residents and staff; daily reporting and public information on COVID-19 cases and deaths, including demographic and staffing data; and notification for residents, their legal representatives, and employees. The bill would help nursing home residents and families by providing advance notice to the resident or legal representative before discharge or transfer from a nursing home that includes the right to appeal and the long-term care ombudsman's name and contact information.

The legislation would help ensure quality of care by developing criteria for nursing homes dedicated to the care of residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 and ensuring that nurse aides satisfy applicable training and certification requirements within 15 days of the end of the emergency period. Additionally, we appreciate efforts to support virtual visits including ensuring an adequate number of employees to assist nursing home residents in communicating with family members and friends. Your bill also improves oversight by increasing surveyor attention to nursing homes, developing a plan for conducting waived or postponed surveys, having criteria

for reinstating waived requirements for nursing homes before the end of the public health emergency, and ensuring enforcement action.

Addressing the current crisis requires both necessary policy and robust funding. Both are essential ingredients of bipartisan legislation that Congress must pass to address the current disaster in our nation's long-term care facilities and stem the continued loss of life across the country. AARP urges that the next coronavirus package include desperately needed policy changes and funding to address COVID-19 and long-term care facilities.

AARP thanks you for your leadership on this legislation and the ACCESS Act (H.R. 6487). We look forward to working with you and others on a bipartisan basis to address the ongoing crisis in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities in the next coronavirus relief package. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Rhonda Richards on our Government Affairs staff at r-richards@aarp.org.

Sincerely,



Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs