



January 31, 2023

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers
Chairwoman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Rogers and Ranking Member Pallone:

AARP, on behalf of our nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, has deep concerns about H.R. 382, the *Pandemic is Over Act*. While we all want to move beyond COVID-19, this pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on older adults. A staggering 93 percent of all COVID-19 deaths in this country have been Americans aged 50 and older, and those deaths continue at a rate of nearly 1,000 per week. For these reasons, we oppose ending the public health emergency (PHE) until a plan is in place to deal with the endemic effects of this virus on people 50-plus.

As we have [previously urged](#), the PHE should continue until cases have been reduced and there is an orderly transition in place to ensure all Americans can get the care they need. Older Americans rely on programs and flexibilities authorized under the PHE to keep them safe, such as Medicare coverage of at-home COVID tests and coverage of certain treatments. Their health and well-being should be valued as much as Americans of any other age group. COVID-19 has been particularly devastating to seniors living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, which have experienced a disproportionately high share of the infections, complications, and deaths nationwide caused by COVID-19.

Accordingly, we continue to support requiring vaccinations for nursing home staff. The virus is again surging in nursing homes this winter, with case rates increasing by more than 50% in recent weeks. The staff vaccination rule brings critical protection not only to residents, but also to the health care professionals and other staff who have been on the front lines of the pandemic providing essential care to at-risk patient and resident populations. Facilities cannot let preventable problems be repeated. Increasing vaccination rates in nursing homes is one of the most common-sense and powerful actions we can take to protect the lives of vulnerable older adults.

While AARP is encouraged by the significant progress in bringing down the overall impact of the disease, we should not risk falling further backwards when the health and lives of older Americans remain at risk. AARP stands ready to help with this effort in any way that we can. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Glen Fewkes on our Government Affairs team at gfewkes@aarp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Bill Sweeney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Sweeney" clearly distinguishable.

Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs