LCAO Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Debra B. Whitman, Chair

April 24, 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:

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of 69 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population and committed to representing their interests in the policy-making arena. The undersigned members of the LCAO are pleased to support the Advancing Connectivity during the Coronavirus to Ensure Support for Seniors Act (ACCESS Act, S. 3517).

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership to improve access to virtual visitation for nursing home residents and their families during this pandemic. The health and safety of people living in nursing homes is vital. While in-person visitation is restricted, it is essential for residents to have the ability to visit virtually and communicate with their loved ones. Also, expanding telehealth in nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic can increase access to care and assist with efficient use of staff, which is especially critical.

The ACCESS Act would provide grants to nursing homes to obtain and use technologies and services necessary to support virtual visits during the current public health emergency. The grants would help enable more residents and their loved ones to stay connected, including being able to see each other via video. Such communication would help mitigate social isolation and loneliness for residents, which can have a significant impact not only on their mental health and well-being, but also on their physical health and well-being. In addition, virtual visits would provide much-needed reassurance for families, many of whom are very anxious about the well-being of their loved ones.

Moreover, the legislation would provide funding to the Telehealth Resource Center Program to help enable the development of telehealth technologies for nursing homes. Finally, your bill would require a report to Congress on ways to expand access to telehealth in Medicare- and Medicaid-certified nursing homes during the pandemic.

Thank you for your commitment to expand access to virtual visitation and telehealth. Residents and families would truly benefit from virtual visits during this challenging time. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to help make this a reality for more residents and their loved ones.

Sincerely,

AARP
Aging Life Care Association
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Retired Americans
Altarum, Program to Improve Elder Care, Altarum
Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement
Alzheimer's Foundation
AMDA Society for Post-Acute & Long-Term Care Medicine
American Association of Service Coordinators
American Geriatrics Society
American Society on Aging
Association for Gerontological and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities
B'nai B'rith International
Caring Across Generations
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Community Catalyst
Gerontological Society of America
International Association for Indigenous Aging
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge
Medicare Rights Center
National Adult Day Services Association
National Adult Protective Services Association
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Association of RSVP Directors, Inc.
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association (NSCA)
Women's Institute For A Secure Retirement (WISER)

CC: Members of Congress