



The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
U.S Senate Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2020

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), including our nationwide network of advocates, thank you for your continued leadership on issues and legislation important to Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementia, and to their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association and AIM also thank you for your crucial work to support families and businesses affected by COVID-19. We write again today to ask you to pass policies that are urgently needed now to protect and support the millions of Americans living with Alzheimer's and other dementia, and their caregivers, during this pandemic. Specifically, we urge you to provide funding for policies to assist those living in long-term and community-based care settings.

Over 100,000 residents and employees of nursing homes and long-term care facilities have died from COVID-19, representing nearly 40 percent of the total death toll in the United States. These communities are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis, where 48 percent of nursing home residents are living with dementia, and 42 percent of residents in residential care facilities have Alzheimer's or another dementia. Residents with dementia are particularly susceptible to COVID-19 due to their typical age, their significantly increased likelihood of coexisting chronic conditions, and the community nature of long-term care settings. Across the country these facilities, their staff, and their residents are experiencing a crisis due to a lack of transparency, an inability to access the necessary testing, inaccurate reporting, and more.

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM appreciate the long-term care policies that have been included in numerous proposals this year, including provisions in the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools (HEALS) Act, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, and most recently in the bipartisan, bicameral Emergency COVID-19 Relief Act of 2020. Specifically, we support the inclusion of dedicated funding for testing and tracing in nursing homes, long-term care communities, home and

community-based services and assisted living facilities. We are particularly glad to see the proposed \$200 million for nursing home strike teams. Any reported COVID-19 cases should trigger careful, ongoing monitoring and, if conditions warrant, well-trained and equipped strike teams should be deployed to the facility to provide needed support until the outbreak is contained and eliminated. We are also encouraged to see funding for senior nutrition services, such as home-delivered and prepackaged meals, and supportive services through the Older Americans Act for seniors and disabled individuals, and their caregivers.

These crucial provisions are consistent with the Alzheimer's Association's policy recommendations, [Improving the State and Federal Response to COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Settings](#). These recommendations focus on ensuring all long-term care facilities have rapid point-of-care COVID-19 testing and necessary equipment, like personal protective equipment (PPE). We appreciate the Administration's purchase of 150 million rapid tests, a portion of which we expect will be directed to long-term care settings. We also appreciate the focus from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on continued monitoring and increased testing requirements for nursing home workers. Additionally, we note the recent release of recommendations from the Coronavirus Commission for Safety and Quality in Nursing Homes, convened by CMS and facilitated by MITRE Corporation. However these actions still fall woefully short of what is urgently needed to protect the vulnerable Americans living in long-term care communities. We continue to advocate for the daily rapid-response testing for all new individuals who come onsite, and retesting for returning individuals who enter the facility, in accordance with local guidance.

Our policy recommendations suggest all cases of COVID-19 at nursing homes and assisted living communities need to be reported immediately and accurately. These reports should be updated upon remission, death, transfer, or other appropriate status update. With all appropriate privacy safeguards for individuals, this reported data should be freely and immediately accessible to all down to the facility level. It is crucial that data on race and ethnicity are included in this reporting, which will be especially important in ensuring targeted support for the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic, and preparedness for potential future pandemics. We also strongly support policies to address social isolation in long-term care settings, which can have a devastating impact, to ensure people with dementia are able to communicate with designated family and friends.

Furthermore, now that the first safe and effective vaccine is approved, we urge the prioritization of access for Americans over the age of 65, particularly those in long-term care settings. This is consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation that long-term care residents be prioritized for access to vaccines, as well as the health care workers caring for some of the most vulnerable in our country and who provide an enormous service to society as a whole.

Our nation has not done enough to support Americans living in long-term communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to prioritize the above policies that are urgently needed now to help protect our most vulnerable populations. If you have any questions about this or any

other legislation, please contact Rachel Conant, Vice President of Federal Affairs, at rconant@alz-aim.org or at 202.638.7121.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Egge', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Egge
Chief Public Policy Officer
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs
Alzheimer's Association