April 17, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

I am writing on behalf of skilled nursing facilities and assisted living centers in my District and across the Commonwealth of Kentucky that are on the frontlines combating the threat of COVID-19. As you are aware, the threat of this virus is most prevalent with the elderly, particularly those in long term care facilities.

Congress has taken steps to protect our frontline healthcare providers, particularly through the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provided $100 billion to hospitals and healthcare providers. I appreciate your work in getting the first $30 billion of that funding out as quickly as possible. However, to support providers as they battle the spread of coronavirus, I ask that you dedicate some of the next allocation of funding to skilled nursing facilities.

It is vital that disbursements from the COVID-19 Relief Fund be dedicated to skilled nursing facilities and assisted living centers across the country especially those that have confirmed COVID-19 cases. Though skilled nursing facilities could have received monetary assistance through the enhancement of the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP), the Commonwealth used their discretion to direct that funding to administrative needs. That said, the CARES Act funding is even more necessary to aid these facilities in containing the outbreak, as well as preventing further outbreak in non-COVID-19 impacted facilities. In facilities that do not have confirmed COVID-19 cases, additional staffing and supplies can help ensure that residents and staff are able to keep the virus out of their buildings.

The staff and residents in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living communities in the Commonwealth of Kentucky desperately need your immediate and ongoing support. Ensuring that this funding is delivered to these providers promptly is critical to protecting Kentucky’s seniors and most vulnerable.

I truly appreciate your service to our country during this trying time. Should you have any further questions or concerns please reach out to me or my Health Legislative Assistant Claire Osborn at Claire.osborn@mail.house.gov or 202-225-4706.

I appreciate your attention to this request and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Andy Barr  
Member of Congress