



April 17, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The National MLTSS Health Plan Association, Association for Community Affiliated Plans, National PACE Association, SNP Alliance, America's Health Insurance Plans, Medicaid Health Plans of America and Blue Cross Blue Shield Association commend you for your quick, expansive efforts to address the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States. Collectively, our organizations represent the significant majority of health plans providing coverage to Medicaid beneficiaries with long-term services and supports (LTSS) needs.¹ We share a focus on delivering high-quality services and supports at the same or lower cost as the fee-for-service system to ensure beneficiaries' quality of life and ability to live as independently as possible.

The recent passage of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* (CARES Act), in addition to the two previous legislative efforts, have provided crucial funding, relief and flexibility for providers and patients to address the national emergency. We commend Congress for assisting the home and community-based services (HCBS) community by increasing the federal matching assistance percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid programs by 6.2 percentage points, appropriating additional funds for home-delivered meals through the Older Americans Act, extending the Money Follows the Person Program through November 30, 2020, and appropriating \$1 billion for the Department of Defense to respond to COVID-19 through Defense Production Act purchases.

Yet, as we respond to the pandemic more must be done to protect HCBS providers and the vulnerable individuals they serve as a result of the pandemic. Our member organizations rely on a

¹<http://mltss.org/>; <https://www.communityplans.net/>; <http://snpalliance.org/>; <https://www.medicaidplans.org/>; <https://www.ahip.org/>; <https://www.npaonline.org/>; <https://www.bcbs.com/>

critical component of the health care work force, including Personal Care Attendants (PCAs), Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and other homecare professionals that assist individuals with functional limitations to maintain their independence and quality of life by assisting with activities of daily living (ADLs) like bathing, dressing, and feeding. By addressing these needs, the HCBS workforce keeps individuals with functional limitations out of more costly nursing facilities and hospitals. They are essential to supporting the health and well-being of vulnerable populations. However, without access to personal protective equipment (PPE)—masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, and other supplies—and testing, in-home workers cannot effectively or safely perform their duties, and older adults and people with disabilities are more likely to end up in a care setting like the emergency room where they are at greater risk to either contract or transmit COVID-19. The need for PPE and testing is dire throughout the health care system. For vulnerable populations, PPE and testing is especially critical.

Thus, in addition to equipping in-patient and other frontline facilities, we urge you to support the HCBS workforce by prioritizing their access to PPE and testing in order to assure their continued viability as a workforce serving the most vulnerable among us. Specifically, we recommend the following high priority policies to protect the HCBS workforce during the public health emergency:

- Include homecare providers—Personal-Care Attendants (PCAs), Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and other homecare workers—as a priority in FEMA PPE and testing for COVID-19 and for future public health emergencies;
- Fully Allocate the \$1 billion from the CARES Act for to increase manufacturing of all forms of PPE needed to address the pandemic under Title III of the Defense Production Act (DPA); and
- Increase production of all forms of PPE—masks, gloves, gowns, face shields—in addition to N-95 masks to current manufacturers and supply chains under Title I of the DPA.

Additional LTSS stakeholders supporting these proposals include: American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), Anthem, BAYADA, Centene Corporation, Commonwealth Care Alliance, Lutheran Services in America, Midwest Urban Strategies and The Arc of the United States.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to addressing the crisis that COVID-19 presents to all Americans. We remain extremely concerned about the potential impact of this national emergency on those who are most vulnerable and those that support them. We urge you to recognize the critical role that the HCBS workforce plays in minimizing the spread of COVID-19

and ask that you act swiftly to bolster their needs by providing access to much-needed resources. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time with questions or for further information at:

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Sincerely,

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