



*Serving Georgia's Elderly Since 1953*

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**Tony Marshall**  
President & CEO

June 19, 2020

Dear Congressman/Congresswoman:

We, the Georgia Center for Assisted Living and the 10 undersigned members of our Association representing 26 assisted living communities in Georgia request your urgent assistance in securing direct federal funding, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and prioritization for testing of COVID-19.

There are nearly 19,000 Georgians living in assisted living communities in our state with 25 beds or more, and more than 18,000 caregivers supporting their needs. Assisted living communities differ from nursing homes in that they are not medical facilities, yet they are facing similar challenges in controlling the spread of the virus. Residents of both types of long term care communities are primarily elderly – more than half of all residents in assisted living communities alone are over the age of 85 – and many live with underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk of complications if they contract COVID-19.

Looking at the data from our state, less than one-third of our residents have been tested for COVID-19. The same applies to caregivers. Though assisted living communities are on the same front line as nursing homes, working hard each day to protect residents from the virus, they have yet to be prioritized. The fact is, assisted living communities have been largely excluded from public support. None received PPE shipments from FEMA. None have received direct federal funding. And few have been prioritized for testing even as confirmed COVID-19 cases are reported to public health officials.

Of the deaths suffered with COVID-19 in long term care communities in Georgia, about 15 percent were living in an assisted living community. It is our duty and responsibility to do everything in our power to prevent human tragedy and continue serving residents and communities, but we cannot meet the extraordinary challenge of combating COVID-19 on our own.

We urgently need your support and the support of the federal government.

We fear that without federal support that the risks to our residents, our caregivers and their families will be untenable. Because we cannot win with caregivers wearing homemade masks, gowns sewn by local seamstresses and painters' suits. We cannot win without onsite testing and real-time results. And we cannot win if our communities slip

into fiscal uncertainty due to an onslaught of unforeseeable though entirely necessary expenditures.

All of our challenges – access to PPE, testing and economic viability – are interrelated.

Without PPE and adequate, reliable and repeated testing for all residents and caregivers, regular caregivers have fallen ill or gone into isolation, forcing our communities to supplement the workforce with additional staff. Residents are prohibited from many activities and communal dining facilities, which incurs social, emotional and – yes, economic costs with a significant increase in the number of dietary staff required. Families are unable to move past window visits, video chats and socially distanced parades and we are unable to tell them when this will change even as the rest of Georgia begins to re-open.

Assisted living communities are not re-opening. We will remain locked into the status quo unless and until local, state and federal officials rally behind us, just as you have begun to do for nursing homes, which have similar vulnerable populations to ours.

We urge you to support the request our sector has made and to contact Secretary Azar to request that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provide an emergency response fund distribution of \$5 billion for assisted living communities, like the agency did for hospitals and nursing homes, from the Provider Relief Fund created through the CARES Act.

We also call upon you to contact Administrator Gaynor at FEMA and voice your support that his agency equip assisted living communities with PPE that meets Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards. If we cannot protect our caregivers on the frontlines, we cannot protect our residents.

The caregivers and residents in Georgia's assisted living communities need your voice.

If you have any questions or concerns about the conditions of our assisted living communities and would like to speak with us, please contact me at [tony.marshall@ghca.info](mailto:tony.marshall@ghca.info), or any other signatory below. Any or all of us would welcome the chance to speak with you directly about our concerns and our needs going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tony Marshall  
President & CEO

Samantha Allen, Executive Director  
Jonesboro Assisted Living

Barbara Barron, Senior Director of Quality  
Sunrise Senior Living

- Brighton Gardens of Buckhead
- Bright Gardens of Dunwoody
- Sunrise at Buckhead
- Sunrise at Five Fork
- Sunrise at Huntcliff Summit
- Sunrise at Ivey Ridge
- Sunrise at Webb Gin
- Sunrise of Decatur
- Sunrise of East Cobb
- Sunrise of Johns Creek

Kathyjo Gordon, Executive Director  
Stone Brooke Suites

Becky Dasher Livingston, Esq. CEO  
The Lodge at Bethany

Debbie Meade, CEO  
Health Management – Summers Landing (Chair of the AHCA Board of Governors)

Barbara Mitchell, VP for Clinical Services & Corporate Compliance Officer  
Magnolia Manor (NCAL Board Member at Large)

- Magnolia Manor of Columbus Assisted Living
- Magnolia Manor of Macon
- Magnolia Manor of St Marys
- Magnolia Manor of St Simons Assisted Living
- Magnolia Manor on the Coast
- Magnolia Manor Retirement Center
- Magnolia Manor South
- Magnolia Place of Cairo

Kim Pitsenbarger, Director  
Summers Landing

Brande Strickland, Executive Director  
Magnolia Place at Cairo

Shanna Dupree, Executive Director  
At Home Senior Living

Tiffany Virden, Executive Director  
Brightmoor Senior Living