**Relief Funding Helps Long Term Care Providers Protect Residents and Staff**

By [XX]

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged long term care providers in ways we can’t imagine. According to [data](https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/state-data-and-policy-actions-to-address-coronavirus/?utm_source=web&utm_medium=trending&utm_campaign=covid-19#long-term-care-cases-deaths) from the Kaiser Family Foundation, long term care residents make up nine percent of the total COVID-19 cases in the U.S. but 43 percent of deaths. It is a staggering number, but it puts into perspective how our nation’s seniors have been disproportionately affected by the vicious nature of this virus.

Despite the challenge we’ve faced, we have never given up. Our caregivers have stepped up in extraordinary ways. Because of their sacrifice, we’ve been able to prevent new outbreaks in our facility. Residents and staff have made full recoveries from the virus. Despite the odds, we’ve saved lives.

This wouldn’t have been possible without help. We asked the country to rally around long term care as we fight this once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, and we appreciate the efforts federal and state governments have made to assist us. With the resources and funding we’ve received in recent months, we’ve been able to better support our residents and staff.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing will always be our first line of defense against the virus. Social distancing is not an option for long term caregivers, so we need a constant supply of quality masks, gowns and gloves to keep them safe from the virus. With many individuals spreading the virus but not showing symptoms, ongoing testing helps us identify those asymptomatic carriers and then make tactical decisions to keep the virus from spreading. However, these essential supplies come at a considerable cost. PPE is at an all-time high due demand from businesses from around the globe. In order to comply with state-mandated testing, we are covering the cost of ongoing testing for our staff and even some residents. As part of our rigorous infection control procedures, we’re purchasing additional cleaning equipment and products to disinfect high-touch areas regularly.

The pandemic has caused put a strain on our workforce. Some workers have fallen ill with the virus as they’ve fought courageously on the frontlines, while some have been quarantined as they wait for COVID test results. Others have had to take time off to care for sick family members or provide childcare. Much of the relief funding we’ve received has been used to bolster our frontline nurses, aides and support staff.

We’ve invested heavily in our fearless caregivers who have literally put their lives on the line since day one. Instead of spending time with their families, they’re working overtime or volunteering for a double shift. They are among the heroes of this pandemic, and we believe they deserve hero pay. We’ve increased hourly wages, offered paid sick leave and provided overtime compensation and bonuses for staff who continue to go the extra mile. In order to minimize the risk of exposure, we’ve provided snacks and meals to staff during their shifts, so they don’t have to leave the facility.

Our staff has become surrogate family members for our residents. Face-to-face visits with family and friends are a vital component to overall health and well-being of all of our residents, and we’ve missed the familiar faces of loved ones walking through our halls. When government agencies required that we stop in-person visits, we knew we had to find a way to enable communication from a safe distance. We have been able to purchase activities and equipment for our residents to stay connected with their families and each other until we are ready to safely welcome loved ones back into our community.

Our expenditures have greatly increased to fight COVID-19, but there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our residents and staff. We will continue to do whatever it takes to prevent the spread of the virus, and the assistance we’ve received thus far has made a difference in the midst of an unprecedented crisis.

There is a long road ahead, but we have every reason to be optimistic if we continue receiving the funding and resources we need. As the pandemic continues, federal and state governments must make long term care a priority because we cannot fight this alone. With more help, we can continue protecting our greatest generation and the selfless workers who are watching over them day and night.

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