

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Long-Term Care Provider Associations Issue Joint Release

Heroic efforts made by providers to protect our most vulnerable citizens during pandemic. Where is their support?

Austin, TX – It cannot be denied that nursing homes and assisted living communities are on the frontline in the war against COVID-19. Nursing homes are enduring the greatest concentration of outbreaks, and deaths in Texas and across the nation. The numbers are heartbreaking.

The long-term care system was caring for our most vulnerable population long before the COVID-19 pandemic started. Our providers are putting forth heroic efforts to care for older Texans despite funding and workforce shortages. Long-term care communities have limited access to testing, and a majority lack adequate personal protective equipment for residents and staff. They have encountered difficulty getting priority access to masks and have limited ability to compete for them on the open market. Nursing homes already on the financial brink are faced with thousands of dollars in additional costs to care for one COVID-19 positive resident in their building. If the virus spreads, the home must find additional resources to properly treat and contain the virus. Those financial resources do not exist, and we have received no promises that additional aid will be coming.

A CDC report released on March 26, 2020 found that “overall, 31% of cases, 45 % of hospitalizations, 53% of ICU admissions and 80% of deaths associated with COVID-19 were among adults aged over 65 years with the highest percentage of serve outcomes among persons aged 85 and older”. The majority of long-term care residents are over the age of 85 with compromised health conditions. Our front-line workers are putting their own health and safety at risk to care for a vulnerable population that will be most impacted by COVID-19. They are doing this with a scarcity of necessary resources.

Nursing homes and assisted living communities have been in lockdown for over a month, not allowing residents to see their family members in person, performing regular symptom checks on residents and staff daily, and pushing their infection control programs into overdrive. Unfortunately, this only goes so far in preventing the spread of the disease. A high percentage of the virus is spread by people who have no symptoms or have yet to show symptoms, especially in the elderly population. This means that despite their best efforts, COVID-19 infections spread in their buildings without them even knowing it.

Long-term care providers are doing their part every day to aggressively prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as we deliver compassionate care under unprecedented circumstances. We call on our communities and elected leaders to join us on the frontlines of this pandemic and make long-term care a priority for preemptive-rapid testing, PPE and emergency financial aid. Together we can stem the tide of infection for older people and their caregivers and grant them the priority status they deserve and so desperately need.

Our mothers, fathers, and senior living heroes deserve it.

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LeadingAge Texas, Texas Health Care Association, and Texas Assisted Living Association are state associations representing independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing providers across Texas.