



## Protecting Seniors and People with Disabilities in Congregate Settings from COVID-19

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) poses an unprecedented threat to the more than [14 million Americans](#) who require long-term services and supports and the workers who support them. The risks presented by COVID-19 are amplified for seniors and people with disabilities living in congregate settings, like nursing homes and intermediate care facilities. To protect seniors and people with disabilities, Congress must advance policies to keep residents in congregate settings safe and help as many people as possible receive services in their homes and communities. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Casey has already taken steps to this effect by:

### ❖ **Protecting Nursing Home Residents and Workers:**

- In May 2020, Senator Casey introduced the [Nursing Home COVID 19 Protection and Prevention Act](#) (S. 3768) to provide \$20 billion in emergency funding to support states, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities and psychiatric hospitals. The bill promotes best practices, including cohorting, which involves separating individuals with COVID-19 from those who do not have the virus, to reduce the spread of infection and to save lives. Additionally, the bill supports workforce needs through the use of “surge” teams and provides funding for personal protective equipment (PPE), testing and other workforce needs, like premium and overtime pay.
- The CARES Act, which was signed into law in March 2020, included funding from Senator Casey’s bill, the [Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act](#) (S. 3544), allocating \$100 million to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and states to enhance infection control in nursing homes through surveys and inspections.
- In March 2020, Senator Casey led a [letter](#) with 39 Senate Democrats to the White House Coronavirus Task Force asking how the Administration is protecting nursing home residents and workers from COVID-19.
- In April 2020, Senator Casey sent a bipartisan [letter](#) with Senator Toomey to CMS asking what the agency is doing to ensure that underperforming nursing homes, identified as needing additional oversight through the Special Focus Facility (SFF) program, are meeting the needs of their residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In April 2020, Senator Casey wrote a [letter](#) to CMS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with Senator Wyden urging these agencies to release the names of nursing homes that have a confirmed case of COVID-19. In response, CMS announced that nursing homes would be required to report any COVID-19 cases and deaths in their facility. CMS also committed to making this information publicly available.

#### ❖ **Promoting Care at Home to Limit the Spread of COVID-19:**

- In March 2020, Senator Casey introduced the [Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act](#) (S. 3544) to ensure more individuals can receive essential services in their homes, away from congregate settings, helping to combat the continued spread of the virus. The bill also invests in this workforce by permitting states to use Medicaid funding for premium and overtime pay and other essential benefits for workers.
- In March 2020, Senator Casey led a [letter](#) with 37 Senate Democrats to the White House Coronavirus Task Force urging the Administration to ensure that home and community-based services are available to seniors and people with disabilities and that home care workers are sufficiently equipped with protective gear.

#### ❖ **Protecting and Supporting the Heroes on the Front Lines:**

- In April 2020, Senator Casey, alongside a group of Senate Democrats, proposed the [Heroes Fund](#). This proposal would provide premium payments to essential front line workers, including nursing home and home health workers, ensure the retention of essential workers, protect these workers with PPE and promote the recruitment of additional workers who will be needed in the months ahead. Without this essential workforce individuals will not be able to receive critical services in nursing homes or at home.
- In May 2020, Senator Casey introduced *the* [Pandemic Responder Service Award Act](#) (S.3763). This bill would allow front line health care workers to receive \$10,000 annually for four years in order to pay off existing student loan debt, obtain a post-secondary education or save for the future. These front line health care workers deserve the same type of compensation that the United States gave to soldiers coming back from WWII through the G.I. Bill.

#### ❖ **Curbing Social Isolation:**

- In March 2020, Senator Casey cosponsored the bipartisan [ACCESS Act](#) (S. 3517) with Senators Klobuchar and Capito. This legislation would facilitate access to “virtual visits” with family members for nursing home residents and enhance the use of telehealth in nursing homes.