



## Additional Support Needed for Older Adults and People with Disabilities Affected by Coronavirus

As the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) becomes clearer, the need to protect and support older adults and people with disabilities is even more apparent. Congress should take immediate additional steps to ensure older adults and people with disabilities receive the services, supports and protection needed. Specifically, Congress should:

- ❖ **Support Direct Service Providers (DSP) That Help People Remain in Their Homes:** Congress must provide new and dedicated Medicaid funding to protect home health workers/Direct Service Providers (DSPs) and ensure access to home and community-based services. This funding would allow states to increase wages and provide overtime pay for DSPs, purchase urgently needed personal protective equipment (PPE) and reduce wait list rolls for people who need home and community-based services and supports.
- ❖ **Provide Nutrition Funding and Flexibility to Ensure Seniors Can Stay Home as Much as Possible:** Funding is needed to modify current programs to continue providing services while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Funding must be directed toward developing contactless delivery options so that individuals can receive necessary groceries, particularly for recipients of SNAP who are unable to process payments online or over the phone. And, increased funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (i.e., senior food box program) would allow seniors to receive additional food items and would support administrative costs associated with delivery.
- ❖ **Benefit Enhancements for Seniors Receiving Social Security:** Congress should enhance Social Security benefits for the lowest income recipients of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program and for people with disabilities who need Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Specifically, Congress should relax eligibility standards so more people qualify for benefits during the COVID-19 emergency and can access essential income and Medicare benefits as soon as possible. Further, funding should be provided for grants to organizations to assist SSDI and SSI claimants as they navigate the programs during this public health emergency.

- ❖ **Provide Increased Access to Senior Legal Services:** Congress should provide funding to support senior legal services, including senior legal hotlines, which offer advice, legal drafting and referrals to services on a range of issues including, landlord/tenant issues, advanced directives and financial exploitation. Senior legal service organizations are receiving an increased volume of requests as of result of COVID-19. Funding would help ensure that seniors can resolve issues that help them remain in their homes, maintain their benefits and plan for the future.
- ❖ **Protect At-Risk Americans from Frauds and Scams:** Congress should fund a nationwide public awareness campaign, led by the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission, to warn the public about COVID-19 related scams. Con artists are using the pandemic as an opportunity target seniors in attempts to swindle them out of their money, obtain their personal identifiable information or peddle fraudulent products. Funding would enable the federal government to significantly enhance their efforts to educate seniors and other consumers on ways to avoid falling victim to coronavirus-related schemes.
- ❖ **Ensure Affordable Access to Medicare Coverage and Services:** As the coronavirus outbreak upends Americans' lives and routines, places enormous pressure on health care professionals and disrupts access to services, Congress should enact policies to ensure no person newly eligible for Medicare goes without coverage. Additionally, Congress should facilitate access to essential health care services for seniors and people with disabilities by enacting provisions to ease appeals processes and enhance affordability, particularly among low-income seniors and people with disabilities.

*This fact sheet is the third in a series released by U.S. Senator Bob Casey to help protect Americans from COVID-19. You can find the first two fact sheets online [here](#) and [here](#).*