

# Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act (S. 3544)

Sponsored by: Bob Casey (D-PA)

## Why do we need the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act?

More than [105 million Americans—or about 4 in 10 adults](#)—are at heightened risk if infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), including older adults, people with disabilities and those with underlying health conditions. The front-line workers and family caregivers who support these individuals also face increased risks, requiring additional resources and supports to protect their health and well-being.

**What would the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act do?** The bill will address critical health and economic needs for older adults, people with disabilities, front-line workers and family caregivers. **Specifically, the bill would:**

**Increase funding for nursing home surveys to promote infection control:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has deployed its armament of state inspectors to assess nursing facilities' infection control practices as COVID-19 continues to spread. Well before COVID-19, these essential activities were already operating at a deficit, as the Trump Administration requested a \$44.8 million increase for health facility surveys and inspections in FY2021. Emergency funds are needed to support CMS and States as they work to save lives and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes.

**Cover the cost of treatment for low-income seniors and boost the economy:** The bill would leverage existing low-income assistance programs for people with Medicare to ensure seniors and people with disabilities living on low, fixed incomes can afford the treatment they need if diagnosed with COVID-19. Individuals living on incomes at or below roughly \$19,000 who have limited savings would be auto-enrolled in assistance to cover the cost of their Medicare Part B premiums and cost-sharing. The bill would also enhance economic stimulus by putting Medicare premium dollars back in beneficiaries' pockets. Seniors and people with disabilities would keep about \$145 per month, allowing them to buy needed essentials, like food and medicine.

**Promote home and community-based services and protect home health workers:** Through Medicaid grants to States, the bill would provide funding to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities who need care at home can receive it. States need these additional, new dollars to minimize waiting lists for home and community-based services and to provide wage increases as well as overtime pay and paid sick, medical and family leave to home health workers.

**Make sure seniors and people with disabilities have healthy food and other services at home:** The bill would provide increased, emergency funding for programs that allow seniors and people with disabilities to remain healthy and safe at home—where the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) urges they remain during the COVID-19 outbreak. Funding would allow States and community-based providers to offer 3 meals a day, 7 days a week during the emergency; provide shelf-stable food to more seniors through the Senior Food Box program; provide respite care and other supports to family caregivers; support ombudsman programs that must transition to virtual services while nursing homes are locked down to limit the spread of COVID-19; and more.

**Co-Sponsors:** Senators Booker (D-NJ), Brown (D-OH), Menendez (D-NJ), Jones (D-AL), Peters (D-MI), Duckworth (D-IL), Gillibrand (D-NY), Sinema (D-AZ), Blumenthal (D-CT), Kaine (D-VA), Hassan (D-NH), Reed (D-RI), Warren (D-MA), Smith (D-MN), Tester (D-MT), Sanders (I-VT), Shaheen (D-NH), Baldwin (D-WI), Klobuchar (D-MN), Rosen (D-NV), Markey (D-MA), Cortez Masto (D-NV), Merkley (D-OR), Coons (D-DE), Van Hollen (D-MD), Harris (D-CA), Bennet (D-CO) and Cantwell (D-WA).

**Supporters:** More than **80 national and state organizations** representing older adults, people with disabilities and home health care workers, among others, support the bill, including:

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1. Access Living
2. ACCSES
3. ACHEIVA
4. Alliance for Aging Research
5. Alliance for Retired Americans
6. Alzheimer's Association
7. Alzheimer's Foundation of America
8. Alzheimer's Impact Movement
9. American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
10. American Association on Health and Disability
11. American Council of the Blind
12. American Diabetes Association
13. American Network of Community Options and Resources
14. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
15. American Physical Therapy Association
16. American Psychological Association
17. Arthritis Foundation
18. Assistive Technology Programs Association
19. Association of People Supporting Employment First
20. Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
21. Autistic Self Advocacy Network
22. Autism Speaks
23. Brain Injury Association of America
24. California Health Advocates
25. Center for Medicare Advocacy
26. Center for Public Representation
27. Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
28. Community Legal Services Philadelphia
29. Community Service Society of New York
30. Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
31. Cure Spinal Muscular Atrophy
32. Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund
33. Disability Rights North Carolina
34. Disability Pride Philadelphia, Inc.
35. Elder Justice Coalition
36. Empire Justice Center
37. Gerontological Society of America
38. Global Down Syndrome Foundation
39. Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
40. Justice in Aging
41. KenCrest
42. Lakeshore Foundation
43. LiveOn NY
44. Lutheran Services in America
45. Lutheran Services in America-Disability Network
46. Meals on Wheels America
47. Medicaid Matters NY
48. Medicare Rights Center
49. National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
50. National Adult Day Services Association
51. National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
52. National Association for Home Care and Hospice
53. National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
54. National Association of RSVP Directors
55. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services
56. National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
57. National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
58. National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Association
59. National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
60. National Council for Aging
61. National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
62. National Center for Learning Disabilities
63. National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
64. National Council on Independent Living
65. National Down Syndrome Congress
66. National Down Syndrome Society
67. Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
68. New York Legal Assistance Group
69. NY Statewide Senior Action Council
70. Pennsylvania Association of People Supporting Employment First
71. Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging
72. Pennsylvania Provider Coalition Association
73. Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living
74. PHI
75. Program to Improve Eldercare, Altarum
76. Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association of Pennsylvania
77. SAGE
78. SEIU
79. Social Security Works
80. TASH
81. The Arc of the United States
82. The Jewish Federations of North America
83. The Support Sight Foundation Support
84. United Cerebral Palsy National
85. United Spinal Association