

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN *Special Committee on Aging*

The COVID HCBS Relief Act of 2021 (S.151)

What is the *COVID HCBS Relief Act*?

The *COVID HCBS Relief Act of 2021* is a bill to provide dedicated Medicaid funds for home and community based services (HCBS) for older adults and children, youth and adults with disabilities. This bill would decrease the need to move people into congregate settings and make it possible for them to receive the services and supports they need from their homes. It also supports service provider agencies and direct care workers who provide those services.

Why Do We Need the *COVID HCBS Relief Act*?

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to surge throughout the country with a [death rate that has been greater than 3,000 a day weeks](#). At the time of this writing there are over almost 420,000 death in the United States from attributed to the virus. [Over 110,000 deaths](#) have occurred in long-term care congregate settings. People with [developmental disabilities have a death rate](#) from the virus that is three times that of the general population. While vaccines are being distributed, at the time of this writing [no state has more than three percent of its population vaccinated](#). At the same time, many of the [agencies that provide HCBS are at risk of financial collapse](#). Finally, those frontline, essential workers who provide HCBS are in need of increased pay, family leave and personal protective equipment to ensure they are safe and can keep those they serve safe. To ensure older adults and people with disabilities can remain in their own homes, receive the services and supports they need, and avoid going to congregate settings, we must provide dedicated funding for home and community based services.

What Would the *COVID HCBS Relief Act* Do?

The *COVID HCBS Relief Act of 2021* would provide dedicated Medicaid funds to states during the pandemic to address the needs of people eligible for home and community based services. States would receive a 10 percent FMAP increase to be used to enhance HCBS. Funds can be used to increase direct care worker pay, provide benefits such as paid family leave or sick leave, pay for transportation expenses to and from the homes of those being served, purchase personal protective equipment for workers and those they are supporting and provide hazard pay. The extra dollars also can be used to support family care givers, pay for recruitment and training of additional direct care workers and pay for technology to facilitate services. Finally, the funds can help provide services for the over [800,000 people](#) on state HCBS waiting lists.

Co-sponsors: Senators Booker, Van Hollen, Blumenthal, Menendez, Smith, Duckworth, Warren, Stabenow, Brown, Shaheen, Merkley, Peters, Gillibrand, Reed, Markey, Baldwin, Klobuchar and Sanders.

The *COVID HCBS Relief Act of 2021* will also be introduced in the House by Rep. Debbie Dingell.

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Michael Gamel-McCormick (michael_gamel-mccormick@aging.senate.gov).