



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON  
FLORIDA

March 28, 2014

Aviva Sufian  
Special Envoy for US Holocaust Survivor Services  
Administration for Community Living  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Ms. Sufian:

Congratulations on your recent appointment as the first Special Envoy for US Holocaust Survivor Services; the need is great and the time increasingly urgent for our nation's Holocaust survivors. As Chairman and participants at the Senate Special Committee on Aging's recent hearing, "Aging in Comfort: Assessing the Special Needs of America's Holocaust Survivors," we write to share with you findings from the hearing, and to request your assistance and partnership moving forward as we address the overwhelming need within this population.

First, we ask that you conduct a full assessment of the gaps in funding for Holocaust survivors with respect to social services' needs. We cannot begin to address a problem for which we do not understand the scope. For instance, we do not know nationally how many survivors await services or how far the funding gap extends. We know, for instance, that the complex social, emotional, and physical dynamics faced by aging Holocaust survivors require a different approach to traditional long-term care models, and the importance of keeping survivors in their home or in a familiar environment for as long as possible—but we do not know how many survivors are on waiting lists for services like home health care because they have already exhausted the cap set by the Claims Conference.

With respects to home care services specifically, the Jewish Social Service Agency of Greater Washington estimates that home care costs can range from \$1,900 to 10,000 per year, but testimony at the Aging Committee hearing highlighted costs much higher, and further, estimated that that the levels of home care funding announced in 2013 by the Claims Conference would meet only 25% of the current needs of impoverished survivors. It is important to understand what services could cost, and it is fundamental that we enumerate how many individuals are waiting for care that is not covered. Better tracking of funds and a full assessment of need will help to provide the data needed to ensure fair compensation for survivors. We would appreciate your sharing any data with the Committee, as well as any planned action steps to better assess need across our nation in this area.

Finally, we ask that you conduct a thorough review of any unintended barriers that may exist in our federal programs that hinder Holocaust survivors from receiving the services available to all American seniors. For instance, at the Committee's hearing last month, one witness detailed his frustration with state agencies that continue to count reparations as income when determining eligibility and amount of federal benefits. The Victims of Nazi Persecution Act of 1994 (P.L.

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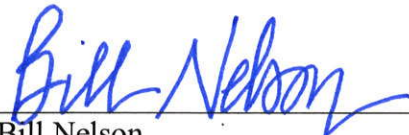
103-286) explicitly exempts reparations payments from being counted toward eligibility for purposes of federal benefits, and has been the law of the land for twenty years. There is no excuse for this type of activity.

In another example, one witness testified before the Committee that her father was denied long-term care insurance due to his precarious health status—some of which stemmed directly from beatings and starvation he endured at Auschwitz. This is a common situation for survivors who bear lifelong marks of their fragile health as a result of the Holocaust. As of April 2009, her father was number 9,730 on Maryland's Medicaid waiver list with an estimated three to four year wait for basic home and community-based services. As you consider the unintended barriers that may exist in our federal programs, we hope that you will not only consider education that may be needed to our state and local agencies who administer these programs, but also any additional administrative actions you can take that will lessen any unfair burden experienced by this population to accessing the rightful care they need.

We have reviewed with interest the initial plans for your activities as Special Envoy, including the soliciting of volunteers from AmeriCorps and fundraising activities. However, an assessment of the funding shortfall, and in what areas, and a review of our federal programs, are steps that must happen in order for the United States to be successful in this effort. Such actions will both pay dividends as the United States continues negotiations with Germany for our survivors, and will ensure transparency and the best possible use of available funds and resources we have today and in the future.

The full video of the Committee's hearing as well as all of the witnesses' testimonies are available on the Aging Committee's website ([www.aging.senate.gov](http://www.aging.senate.gov)); we hope it will be useful to you in your efforts. We looked forward to continuing to work with you on this very important initiative.

Sincerely,



Bill Nelson



Ben Cardin



Elizabeth Warren



Richard Blumenthal

Cc: Kathy Greenlee, Administrator, Administration for Community Living and Assistant Secretary of Aging, US Department of Health and Human Services

Cc: Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services