

# U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY

---



**RANKING MEMBER** *Special Committee on Aging*

---

**Sen. Casey's Opening Statement  
"Caring for Seniors Amid the COVID-19 Crisis"  
May 21, 2020**

**OPENING STATEMENT**

"Thank you, Chairman Collins, for convening this hearing. Our nation is facing the greatest public health crisis it has seen in a century. This terrible, terrible virus is causing death and destruction at lightning speed.

"For seniors, the only thing that is moving faster than the virus itself is fear—the fear of being alone, the fear of contracting the virus and of course the fear that comes from isolation. And, that has every member of the family worried.

"Thousands of seniors in hospital ICUs and nursing homes are dying scared and alone, with no family and no friends to comfort them in their final moments. Millions more are sitting at home, isolated from their loved ones and scared to death often to leave the house even to get a bag of groceries.

"This unprecedented challenge calls for equally unprecedented action. The Administration has to do more, Congress has to do more, to help our seniors and their families at every turn. It is now May 21<sup>st</sup> and we still have no national testing strategy from the Administration.

"The lack of personal protective equipment continues to put our health care providers and other essential, front line workers at risk. In turn, this puts every single person they come into contact with at risk and it also puts at risk the entire community.

"Nursing home residents, who make up .05 percent of the population, yet deaths associated with nursing homes and other long term care settings account for more than one-third of all deaths from COVID-19, as Senator Collins just outlined.

"Still to this day, we are trying to help those residents and workers in nursing homes with one hand tied behind our backs because the Administration is not, is not releasing any data on outbreaks in these facilities. This is unconscionable.

"And, the Administration needs to act we have heard promises that by the end of May they will. We need to see specific evidence that they are changing policy to give families, residents and workers in nursing homes and other long term care settings more information.

“Congress has taken a number steps, as Chairman Collins outlined.

“We have added unprecedented amounts of funding to purchase personal protective equipment to keep workers from contracting and transmitting the virus. We have funded efforts to help health care workers and health providers help patients in those settings. We have provided dollars to ensure that seniors have access to proper nutrition at home, but this is not nearly enough.

“The policies and funding in these four bills that we have passed into law so far only begin to scratch the surface. Congress has to do more!

“Just last week, the House of Representatives passed the HEROES Act, that legislation among many things calls for policies I have been calling for since the beginning of this crisis especially as it relates to seniors.

“The bill would require nursing homes and other long term care facilities to collect data on the impact of the virus on residents so that we know how to distribute resources. The bill would also provide those nursing homes with the dollars they need to contain the spread of the virus.

“The bill would also invest in home and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities, especially the 800,000 on waitlists for care so that they can receive services and supports they need to keep them out of congregate settings. The bill would also pay our essential, frontline workers for leaving the safety of their homes to care for our aging loved ones.

“For the generation that worked in our factories, fought our wars, taught our children, built the middle class, built the nation that we have, and gave each of us life and love we have to do more for our seniors. We cannot stop working we cannot stop legislating, we cannot stop appropriating dollars to help our seniors.

“We owe it to them to do everything, there is no such thing as too much for our seniors in the grip of this pandemic.

“Again, thank you, Chairman Collins, for convening this critically important hearing—the first hearing in Congress on the impact of COVID-19 on seniors – and I look forward to the testimony from our witnesses as well as the questions.”

#####