

# 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) and Harris (D-CA).

**Supporters:** More than **70 national and state organizations** representing older adults, people with disabilities and home health care workers, among others, support the bill, including:

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