



May 7, 2020

The Honorable Brian Kemp
206 Washington Street, Suite 203
State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp,

I serve as the president of LeadingAge Georgia, the association for not-for-profit and other mission-driven housing and in-home care providers who serve older adults across Georgia. First, we would like to thank you for your leadership during the coronavirus pandemic. So much has been asked of you.

As of today, there have been 633 deaths in long-term care facilities across Georgia. This represents 47 percent of all deaths from the coronavirus in the State. There have been relatively few deaths in LeadingAge communities, largely due to the infection control measures that our members have implemented.

As you know, asymptomatic individuals can infect residents in long-term care communities and one of the biggest risks to residents of these communities is asymptomatic staff who come in to provide care.

We greatly appreciate that you sent in the Georgia National Guard to help with infection control. This is a monumental undertaking by the State under your direction. However, if an asymptomatic staff person or an older adult transferred from a hospital comes in to the building after the infection control efforts, the residents and staff are at risk for the virus.

We have seen that residents in long-term care do not fit the typical symptoms listed by the CDC. The resident's symptoms instead include weakness, loss of appetite and then the virus quickly spreads throughout the body and too often they often succumb to death.

We would like to ask for your leadership in three key areas to save lives of older adults in long-term care facilities.

As clinical trials show success for the treatment of the coronavirus, we need for older adults in long-term care facilities to have access to the treatments. For example, Emory University was one of the clinical trial sites that found Remdesivir to be an effective treatment. Currently, it is only available for emergency use in hospitals. We ask that you stay in contact with Emory University regarding clinical trial outcomes and ask they keep you informed regarding the safety and efficacy of treatments for older adults. We ask that you work with the Trump administration to make these medications available to older adults in long-term care facilities through partnerships with hospitals. If we can have these medications administered in long-term care facilities as soon as the virus is discovered we can save lives.

We ask for your help in making rapid testing available in long-term care settings so that we can test staff before they start their shifts. It is the only way we can keep asymptomatic staff from spreading the virus. It will also allow medical treatment of residents early in the disease process which can hopefully prevent the worsening of the disease and save lives.

Finally, our members continue to struggle to locate personal protection equipment to purchase. We need the PPE to prevent the spread of the virus. We would be grateful for any assistance you can give us including allowing our members to purchase it from the State.

Our members are mission-based and 65% of them are affiliated with religious organizations like the Methodist, Episcopal, Catholic and Lutheran churches. They are doing a great job caring for residents during this pandemic. Still, we are very concerned about the lives of each person served in our communities and each staff person. We humbly ask that you do all you can in the areas we addressed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Ginny Helms

Ginny Helms, President

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