

News from Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

Representing New York's 7th Congressional District • Brooklyn, Manhattan & Queens
Chairwoman, House Small Business Committee



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New York Lawmakers Seek Pandemic Help for Nursing Homes

Washington, DC – Members of the New York Congressional Delegation, led by Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY), are calling for additional help for nursing homes as funds from the recently enacted “CARES Act” are distributed. In a bipartisan letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, the lawmakers argue that given the enormous toll COVID-19 is taking on nursing home residents, the facilities need additional funding to protect seniors and reduce transmission and mortality rates.

“Throughout New York City and state, we’re hearing heartbreaking stories of the virus spreading rapidly in nursing facilities and taking lives of those living there,” Velázquez said. “These are our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. We need to steer resources to where they can be most effective and boosting resources for our nursing homes and their dedicated staff, now, will save lives.”

According to New York State Department of Health Data, 2,000 people across the state have died in nursing homes from the pandemic. The CARES Act, which was signed into law on March 27, provided \$100 billion to hospitals and other healthcare providers to help cope with the strain brought on by treating COVID-19 patients. While an initial \$30 billion of that funding has been allocated, the Administration is currently formulating policies for distribution of the remaining resources.

“The members of the Continuing Care Leadership Coalition -- who comprise some of the most innovative not-for-profit long term care providers in the nation -- have been working tirelessly to rise to the challenges of this crisis by caring for the people living in their facilities with dignity and dedication,” said Roxanne Tena-Nelson, Senior Advisor and Special Counsel, Continuing Care Leadership Coalition. “Our members have been an essential element of the health care response effort by keeping people out of the hospital, relieving the burden on their acute care partners, and bringing creativity and compassion to the care of older and disabled people. We are grateful to New York’s leaders for recognizing their efforts by fighting for support in this time of need.”

“New York State has been the epicenter of the Coronavirus and our nursing homes have been struggling to maintain staffing and provide proper protective equipment to staff and residents throughout this crisis. Congresswoman Velázquez and the rest of the Congressional delegation’s support of the heroic efforts of the workers and the residents they serve is to be commended. We join with the delegation in urging federal officials to prioritize the distribution of relief funds to ensure Medicaid providers in high-need areas, such as New York State, receive the critical financial support

needed to protect our most vulnerable,” James W. Clyne, Jr., President and CEO of LeadingAge New York, the Association of nonprofit providers of aging services, including nursing homes, said.

“We thank Congresswoman Velazquez and members of the NY Congressional Delegation for their support during this unprecedented time. Nursing homes are providing essential health care services to our communities. We are amazed by our selfless staff and the care they are providing our residents during this pandemic. We ask for financial support during this crisis so we can continue our vital work.” said Al Balko, President CEO MJHS Health System.

In addition to Velázquez, the letter is signed by Senators Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY); and Reps. Yvette Clarke (D-NY); Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY); José E. Serrano (D-NY); Tom R. Suozzi (D-NY); Elise M. Stefanik (R-NY); Paul D. Tonko (D-NY); Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY); Grace Meng (D-NY); Jerrold Nadler (D-NY); Max Rose (D-NY); Adriano Espaillat (D-NY); Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY); Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY); Kathleen M. Rice (D-NY); Eliot Engel (D-NY); Gregory Meeks (D-NY); Joseph D. Morelle (D-NY); Brian Higgins (D-NY); Anthony Brindisi (D-NY); Antonio Delgado (D-NY); Tom Reed (D-NY); and Lee Zeldin (R-NY).

The text of the letter is below and [a pdf is online here](#).

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

As Members of the New York Congressional Delegation who represent the state most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to prioritize nursing homes in future allocations of the CARES Act emergency funding for hospitals and health care providers.

While policies for future distributions are still being developed, we understand that funding would be directed to COVID-19 “hot spots” and provider types not addressed in the initial delivery from the \$100 billion health care provider relief fund. We demand that nursing homes, which were not addressed in the initial distribution, receive their fair share to combat the lethal threat of COVID-19.

According to data provided by the New York State Department of Health, at least 2,000 nursing homes residents across New York State have now died from COVID-19.⁵ In the State of New York, nursing home deaths may continue to climb because of chronic staffing shortages that have exacerbated due to the COVID-19 crisis, a shortage of protective supplies and a continued lack of available testing.

Nursing Home providers face many challenges as they work diligently to address the serious public health risk posed by COVID-19. The staff and residents in nursing homes require immediate support to get them through this crisis. They are in urgent need of staff, essential supplies, and resources to retain health care workers. Therefore, we write to request that you prioritize funding for nursing homes, especially those in COVID-19 “hot spots” to meet the needs of these long-term care facilities. Prioritizing nursing homes funding is critical to protecting the elderly and the most vulnerable throughout the country from COVID-19.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

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