



July 22, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

As Maryland continues to battle COVID-19, skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers are dedicated to being part of the solution during this critical time and to protecting the health of all residents, patients, and staff in their centers. We thank you for your leadership – it has helped Maryland to initially recover better than many other states.

We appreciate that the State of Maryland continues to partner with the long-term and post-acute care sector to conduct and finance testing until August 1, 2020. In a recent Maryland Department of Health (MDH) transmittal, our member facilities were ordered to continue testing after August 1, 2020, without any funding assistance or logistical support from the State.

The Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), LeadingAge Maryland, and LifeSpan Network strongly urge the State of Maryland to continue coordinating, allowing for the use of State labs, and paying for testing in Maryland skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers beyond the current cutoff of August 1, 2020.

We have learned throughout this pandemic that there is a correlation between surges in a community and outbreaks in skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers and other businesses in that community. We have also learned that COVID-19 is often asymptomatic. Maryland continues to experience surges of cases in some communities, and as such, outbreaks in skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers are subject to rise again after several weeks of declining cases.

Now is not the time for the State to stop coordinating and underwriting testing in centers.

Medicaid rates to skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers have not increased during this historic pandemic, despite the fact that Congress appropriated billions of dollars to Maryland in FMAP increases and CARES Act Funding. We know that the State has already invested heavily in creating additional hospital capacity and testing. We request your continued direct support in coordinating and paying for the ongoing testing of residents, patients, and staff in our sector as well.

As you know, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced last week that the federal government would provide Point of Care Testing Machines to 15,000 skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers across the nation. But because Maryland is not considered a hotspot and due to our outstanding hospital care capacity, our skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers are unlikely to receive those machines until late this year or early next year. And even after we receive them, they will not be able to provide the full spectrum of testing that will be required.

Governor Hogan

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Page 2

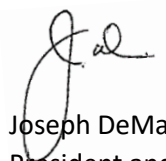
It is not possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our sector if skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers and assisted living campuses have to wait over a week for test results. It is critical that our centers get timely test results to successfully prevent cases from spreading – again, making the lab capacity at Cian and Maryland vitally important to our success in fighting this pandemic.

Universal testing in Maryland skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers would cost approximately \$15,000 to \$75,000 per week depending on the size of the center. When you add in the significantly increased costs of PPE and costs associated with staffing, including hero pay, this becomes an unsustainable cost and will put at risk the quality care provided to Marylanders most in need.

Accordingly, your help on funding the testing mandate is urgently needed, as is your continued work with the sector as testing capacity and clinical knowledge evolves. As such, we ask that the State of Maryland continues to allow our facilities to utilize State labs such as Cian and Maryland, and pay for testing in Maryland skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers.

Finally, we ask you to please continue urging Marylanders to wear masks and to observe social distancing practices – the life they save may be a healthcare hero or a resident in a Maryland nursing home or assisted living center. Again, thank you for your leadership during this historic crisis. We look forward to our continued work together to save lives and protect Marylanders in need.

Be well,



Joseph DeMattos
President and CEO
HFAM



Kevin Heffner
President and CEO
LifeSpan Network



Allison Ciborowski
President and CEO
LeadingAge Maryland

CC: The Honorable Adrienne Jones, Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President, Maryland Senate
The Honorable Robert R. Neall, Secretary, Maryland Department of Health
The Honorable Dennis Schrader, COO & Medicaid Director, Maryland Department of Health
Diane Croghan, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Governor Hogan
Webster Ye, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs, Maryland Department of Health
Eric Shope, Maryland Department of Health
HFAM Board of Directors