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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
May 4, 2020

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

Dear Administrator Verma,

The COVID-19 crisis has hit nursing homes and elder care facilities to a shocking and devastating degree. We have known since the early stages of the pandemic that age is a risk factor for complications from the coronavirus, and now those facilities are bearing the brunt of its effects. I write to ask that your agency take real action and provide real support to seniors and long-term care facilities immediately. I specifically have concerns that your recently-announced independent commission won't meet for a month. This timeline is far too slow.

In response to COVID-19's devastating effect on nursing homes, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has published memos and encouraged state authorities to focus more on the disease. That's clearly not been enough. The proof is in the numbers.

As of April 28, half of the COVID-19 deaths in Stanislaus County in my district were a result of deaths from nursing homes. A single nursing home in my district has 94 confirmed cases among residents and staff. It's clear that drastic and immediate action must be taken to ensure the safety of seniors in long-term care facilities.

Although you have made various recommendations, the speed at which you've provided guidance has been far too slow. According to your department's own announcement, the independent commission you are forming isn't set to meet until the end of May, and there is no timeline for enacting practicable solutions. The Trump Administration's own estimates indicate the number of daily deaths will double and between today and the proposed date for convening your commission. If that estimate is accurate, older Americans – especially those in nursing homes – will continue to become sick and die at shocking, disproportionate rates.

It's clear that drastic and *immediate* action must be taken to ensure the safety of seniors in long-term care facilities. Forming a commission is a fine idea, but it cannot wait to convene or make meaningful recommendations until the end of the month. Too many lives are on the line.

Respectfully,



Josh Harder

Member of Congress