

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Chair
National Governors Association
444 N. Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Thank you for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and your executive order requiring universal testing of all residents and staff in Maryland nursing homes regardless of whether they are symptomatic. On behalf of UsAgainstAlzheimer's (UsA2) and the 5.8 million Americans living with the disease, I am writing you, as Chair of the National Governor's Association, to encourage similar comprehensive testing requirements by all governors across the nation.

In a new UsA2 survey of the Alzheimer's community, 100 percent of the survey respondents with loved ones in long-term care communities support comprehensive testing of all residents and staff. While all residents and staff of long-term care facilities are susceptible to COVID-19, residents with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia are particularly vulnerable. Residents with dementia may lack the cognitive capacity to follow many of the widely-recognized means used by others to avoid becoming infected, such as reporting symptoms, remaining in their rooms, eating independently, or maintaining appropriate 6-foot social distancing from others.

In addition, individuals with Alzheimer's disease, even in its earliest stages, often rely on loved ones to be their advocate and to notice changes in health and behavior. However, according to a recent survey by UsA2, 91 percent of caregivers cannot visit loved ones living in a long-term care facility due to restrictions on visitors. Residents with dementia must rely on policymakers at the state and federal level to keep them safe.

Long-term care communities such as nursing homes and assisted living communities have been hot spots for COVID-19 infections and deaths in Maryland and many other parts of the country. Among states reporting data, long-term care communities account for at least a third of all COVID-19 deaths in 26 states, and more than half of all COVID-19 deaths in 14 of those states. Testing some patients and staff is not sufficient. As you know, much of the challenge in controlling COVID-19 transmission results from asymptomatic transmission of the virus.

Earlier this month, the Administration urged states to test all nursing home residents and staff. Unfortunately, according to one recent analysis, that goal has been unmet in at least half of the states. Making comprehensive testing of all residents and staff in long-term care communities a reality will require action from both state and federal officials. We have urged Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar and senior HHS officials to provide leadership and resources to help states implement comprehensive testing. Neither the federal nor state governments can do this alone, and we believe more states also must step up on testing.

The National Governors Association, and you as its Chair, should encourage all Governors to require COVID-19 testing of all residents and staff of long-term care communities to protect the health and safety of many of the nation's most vulnerable residents. I applaud your decisive action on this

important issue in Maryland; it is urgently needed in other states as well. Please let me know of any way UsAgainstAlzheimer's can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Russ Paulsen".

Russ Paulsen
Chief Operating Officer
UsAgainstAlzheimer's