



Leadership Council
of Aging Organizations

Max Richtman, Chair

April 7, 2021

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Capito
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Janice Schakowsky
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Klobuchar and Capito and Representatives Schakowsky and Bilirakis:

On behalf of the 69 members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), I am writing to reaffirm our support for the Advancing Connectivity during the Coronavirus to Ensure Support for Seniors (ACCESS) Act (S. 57/H.R. 596). LCAO focuses on the well-being of America's older population and is committed to representing their interests in the policy-making arena.

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership to improve access to virtual visitation for nursing home residents and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The health and safety of people living in nursing homes is vital. During this period of continued COVID-related limitations on in-person visitation (whether mandated or voluntary), it is essential for residents to have the ability to visit virtually and communicate with their loved ones. Expanding telehealth in nursing homes can increase access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic and assist with efficient use of staff — two additional critical needs.

The ACCESS Act would provide grants to nursing homes to support virtual visits by family members and other individuals (such as health care providers and long-term care ombudsmen) and would require participating facilities to ensure residents can access these visits. The grants would be used for obtaining and using technologies and services necessary to support such visits during the current public health emergency. In so doing, the grants would help enable more residents and their loved ones to stay connected, including being able to see each other via video. Such communication would help mitigate social isolation and loneliness for residents, which can have a significant impact on physical and mental health and well-being. In addition, virtual visits would provide much-needed reassurance for families, many of whom are very anxious about the well-being of their loved ones. The grants would also enable residents to remain connected with service providers, thus promoting access to vital services and continuity of care.

Thank you, again, for your commitment to expand access to virtual visitation and telehealth during the pandemic. Residents and families would truly benefit from virtual visits during this

challenging time. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to help make this a reality for more residents and their loved ones.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Richtman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chair

Cc: All members of Congress