

National
MLTSS
Health Plan Association

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Legislative Proposals to Address COVID-19's Impact on Long-term Services and Supports

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The National MLTSS Health Plan Association commends you for your rapid bipartisan, bicameral efforts to address the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States. Your leadership has provided the health care system with an immense amount of resources and flexibilities to address this daunting public health emergency. We look forward to your continued efforts in collaboration with the new Administration. As we have detailed in our [past correspondence](#), we must continue to support the long-term services and supports (LTSS) system during the pandemic in order to ensure its viability into the future. Not only must we work together to support institutional LTSS providers such as nursing facilities, but we must not forget about home and community-based services (HCBS). To date during this pandemic, Congress has not passed any legislation with dedicated funding for HCBS, which people with disabilities and older adults rely to stay safe in their own homes and communities. **Therefore, we strongly urge you to support legislation that would provide additional funding to state HCBS programs during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure their viability during and after the end of the pandemic.**

The National MLTSS Health Plan Association represents health plans that contract with states to provide LTSS to beneficiaries through the Medicaid program. Our members currently cover the large majority of all enrollees in MLTSS plans and assist States in delivering high quality long-term services and supports at the same or lower cost as the fee-for-service system with a focus on ensuring beneficiaries' quality of life and ability to live as independently as possible. Beneficiaries who need assistance through LTSS are racially diverse, have a wide range of physical and cognitive disabilities and limitations, and span the entire age range with only half of the population above the age of 65. Member organizations include Aetna Inc.,

AmeriHealth Caritas, Anthem, Centene Corp., Commonwealth Care Alliance, Inclusa Inc., L.A. Care Health Plan, Lakeland Care, Molina Healthcare, UPMC Health Plan and VNSNY CHOICE.

We are extremely concerned about the potential impact of this national emergency on those who have functional limitations, their caregivers, the providers who serve them, and the broader LTSS system. We would like to reiterate our strong recommendation that you act swiftly to bolster support for these individuals and entities by providing access to much-needed resources and flexibilities. These priorities are shared by organizations such as [ADvancing States](#), which represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities, and the [Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities \(CCD\) and the Disability and Aging Collaborative \(DAC\)](#), which are coalitions organizations that work together to advocate on behalf of children and adults with disabilities. In sum, the full LTSS stakeholder community comprised of plans, states, providers, and beneficiaries have unified under the common and essential need for funding dedicated to Medicaid HCBS.

HCBS has played a critical role in providing individuals with functional limitations the opportunity to enjoy an enhanced quality of life in an integrated setting in their homes and communities. Over time the LTSS stakeholder community has worked to rebalance spending and provision of services more towards HCBS. In 2013, the Medicaid system reached the significant threshold of more than half of all LTSS spending going towards HCBS. Transitioning individuals from institutional LTSS to HCBS not only aligns with the preferences of beneficiaries and their families, but it also represents significant savings to the Medicaid program as HCBS is generally less costly than institutional care. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the progress the LTSS community has made to date and potentially jeopardizes future progress as well. As states face budget crises, they are responding by making cuts to Medicaid, particularly for waiver services like HCBS.

We recommend legislation that has already been introduced that would deliver these much-needed resources. For example, the **COVID HCBS Relief Act** would increase the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) for state HCBS programs. Similarly, the **House Committee on Energy and Commerce's recent markup of legislation** for potential inclusion in the COVID-19 relief budget reconciliation legislation includes a similar FMAP increase for state HCBS programs. Both pieces of legislation would offer states the resources necessary to ensure their HCBS providers can maintain fiscal viability during the pandemic. In the absence of such legislation, we are concerned that a broad swath of HCBS providers will soon no longer be able to maintain business operations and permanently close their businesses, which would exacerbate an already severe HCBS provider shortage.

Thank you for your extraordinary leadership and continued commitment to addressing the crisis that COVID-19 presents to all Americans. We remain extremely concerned about the potential impact of this national emergency on the LTSS community and individuals with functional limitations. We stand prepared to work with you and your staff to ensure the providers we work with and the individuals we serve receive the best support possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time with questions or for further information at mkaschak@mltss.org.

Sincerely,



Mary Kaschak
Executive Director