



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

October 9, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

Over the course of the COVID-19 response, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has used different resources to prevent, contain, and mitigate COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care facilities. These resources have been provided through a variety of means and fulfill different aspects of the long-term care facility mission. Due to changes in deployment orders and end of grant periods, the commonwealth will likely lose roughly 250 Pennsylvania National Guard (PANG) members and 300 Regional Response Healthcare Collaborative Program (RRHCP) grantee resources, respectively, on 1 December 2020 who are currently responding to outbreaks in long-term care facilities to include Skilled Nursing Homes, Personal Care Homes, Assisted Living Residences and Intermediate Care Facilities. Without additional, commensurate resources to backfill PANG and RRHCP resources, the safety and lives of long-term care facility residents and staff are at increased risk.

In June, Pennsylvania used \$175 million dollars of CARES Act funding appropriated to us to create the RRHCP, a collaborative partnership between the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. This unique and highly successful program leverages the expertise of Pennsylvania's distinguished health care systems to directly support long-term care facilities that are vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic through preparation, prevention, response, and education. This program has been incredibly effective at helping us to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to respond quickly and appropriately when case outbreaks have occurred in long-term care facilities. Funding for this life-saving program will come to an end by December 31, and we urge you to negotiate further stimulus funding for this crucial program to continue to save long-term care residents and frontline workers during the COVID-19 resurgence.

This program is a critical and desperately needed piece of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 response and mitigation strategy. It has been a remarkably effective use of resources, has kept vulnerable long-term care residents and staff healthy and has undoubtedly saved lives in the commonwealth. It has provided testing for 47,000 residents of personal care homes, assisted living residences, and private intermediate care facilities tested for COVID-19 through baseline testing. It has assigned more than 3,800 missions assisting facilities with readiness assessments, testing, PPE fitting, technical assistance, and infection control consultations. It has helped us provide nearly 1,900 site visits providing direct support to facilities across Pennsylvania. It has allowed us to fund 120 rapid response team deployments to assess, respond, and stabilize potential or active outbreaks at long-term care facilities and protect residents and staff. It has allowed us to respond to 800 calls to the RRHCP's 24/7 call centers, providing on-demand support and assistance. And it has reached over 3,000 participants on learning network webinars, helping facilities

continue to learn best practices and discuss experiences with experts and each other to strengthen response and preparedness.

The RRHCP has been a crucial cornerstone for Pennsylvania's ability to respond to COVID-19 across our long-term care system. Unfortunately, as it is funded through an allocation of CARES Act funds, the RRHCP will be unable to continue past December 30, 2020, without additional funding. Losing this critical piece of our mitigation strategy will be devastating.

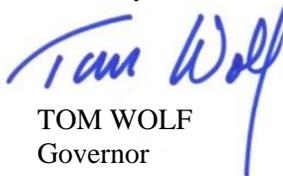
In addition to the looming end date of the RRHCP, Pennsylvania is anticipating the exit of our National Guard supports at the end of the year. Two hundred and fifty Pennsylvania National Guard members are currently deployed to the commonwealth under Title 32 of the United States Code and have been critical to the commonwealth's response within long-term care facilities. To date, the Pennsylvania National Guard has served the equivalent of 7,351 days in the COVID response across the commonwealth in several different capacities including crisis staffing, infection control supervision and training within long-term care facilities, transportation and delivery of short supply materials and emergency supply needs, behavioral health services, and surveying of facilities to assess PPE and staffing needs. In order to ensure continuation of this life-saving assistance amidst a resurgence, it is essential that the Pennsylvania National Guard members' mission be extended beyond the current end date of December 31, 2020, continuing their mission under the Title 32 Duty Status that they are on now, in accordance with the August 3, 2020 Presidential Memorandum titled "Memorandum on the Extension of the Use of the National Guard to Respond to COVID-19 and to Facilitate Economic Recovery." An extension of the National Guard deployment is wholly within your control and would not require negotiations with Congress to effectuate.

Pennsylvania, like states across the country, is facing a large budget deficit due to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and will face significant challenges as we look for any and all revenue available to avoid massive tax increases, or massive cuts to services that our seniors, our working people, and our middle class desperately need. The Pennsylvania National Guard and the RRHCP are indispensable to saving lives in long-term care facilities and, without them, the outcome is indeterminate. We need federal help to ensure that the RRHCP and the National Guard's mission can continue, so that we can keep our seniors and other vulnerable populations that live in long-term care facilities safe from the effects of this virus.

I ask that you immediately restart negotiations with Congress around a new stimulus package that would help fund the RRHCP to help our states both deal with the effects of this pandemic while it occurs and get our citizens and our communities back on their feet as we recover. The states desperately need federal assistance as we work to stop the spread of this disease and to keep our citizens safe. I ask that you engage with Congress without delay so that we do not have to recreate the wheel in the midst of a resurgence of this virus. I ask that you work to help us get additional funding to continue the RRHCP in Pennsylvania and extend the Pennsylvania National Guard mission immediately.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



TOM WOLF
Governor