



September 21, 2022

Honorable James Clyburn
Chairman
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus
Crisis

Honorable Steve Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus
Crisis

Dear Chairman Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, and Members of the Subcommittee,

On behalf of the Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition, we submit this letter outlining next steps that Congress can take now to address priority recommendations in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report on nursing home quality (<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26526/the-national-imperative-to-improve-nursing-home-quality-honoring-our>).

Every person deserves safe, high-quality, age-friendly care and support throughout their life. And the people who dedicate their lives to that work – for whom it is “a calling,” or “the work I was meant to do” – deserve the resources, compensation, training and support to provide that care.

Nearly 1.3 million people live in our nation’s 15,000+ nursing homes and another 1.5 million work in them. And as it stands, many are not receiving that care or support. During the recent coronavirus pandemic, a number of issues in how we deliver and finance person-centered care in our nation’s nursing homes came to light. These challenges are not new.

Given these challenges and a growing number of older people, now is the time for real change. The Moving Forward Coalition is committed to addressing these issues by advancing recommendations from the NASEM Report released in April 2022. We’re building on strong research, clinical expertise, tested models, and committed advocates for effective, sustainable, and feasible improvements.

We write to you now because we need Congress to lead the way toward a future of nursing homes full of the humanity and grace that all people, as well as their care partners, deserve.

NASEM Report recommendations are well aligned with critical needs described in the White House Fact Sheet: Protecting Seniors and People with Disabilities by Improving Safety and Quality of Care in the Nation’s Nursing Homes (released February 28th, 2022). Both documents convey a sense of urgency to address gaps in care and support, as well as best practices.

Here are six critical issues identified in the NASEM Report that Congress can address now to improve nursing home quality:

1. The Major Workforce Crisis at Every Level Must Be Addressed through Workforce Development and Funding

- The U.S. does not have enough direct care professionals such as nurses and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) working in nursing homes, or enough non-clinical workers such as licensed nursing home administrators, dining and environmental services workers.
- Nursing homes are unable to recruit workers in many areas because of workforce shortages and a non-competitive pay scale in part due to inadequate reimbursement rates.
- Action Steps:
 - ⇒ Congress must support the federal government to increase wages and appropriate funds for nursing home workforce development and support systems. These targeted programs will promote nursing home jobs and careers and will increase the number of people hired into nursing home jobs, including certified nursing assistants (CNAs).
 - ⇒ Congress must direct CMS to require state Medicaid programs to reimburse nursing homes for the true cost of care so that providers can pay livable wages.
 - ⇒ Congress must require any new funding for workforce improvements such as wage increases and higher Medicaid reimbursement to cover salaries actually be spent on the workforce and must enforce such requirements.

2. State Survey Processes for Oversight of Nursing Homes Must Be Improved

- The state survey process requires more oversight, accountability, and engagement from CMS to ensure that all nursing homes deliver and improve person-centered, quality care.
- Action Steps:
 - ⇒ Congress must direct CMS to ensure that state survey agencies have adequate capacity, organizational structure and consistency, and resources to fulfill their current nursing home oversight responsibilities for quality improvement, monitoring, investigation, and enforcement.

3. The Public Deserves Greater Nursing Home Transparency

- The public has a right to know who the owners, operators, and leaders are in each nursing home.
- Action Steps:
 - ⇒ Congress must direct CMS to promulgate regulations now that ensure all nursing homes publicly disclose their ownership status and all additional disclosable parties as defined in Sec. 6101 of the Affordable Care Act.
 - ⇒ Congress must require CMS to ensure that all nursing homes and nursing home corporations publicly disclose their ownership status including the names and locations of owners and operators.

- 4. The Cost of Care Must Be Fairly Reimbursed, and Purchasing Costs Reduced**
- Reimbursements for the cost of care and the cost of related purchases have become foundational challenges to strengthening nursing home quality.
 - Action Steps:
 - ⇒ Congress must advance long-term care finance reform both by improving Medicaid program financing and by examining insurance-based approaches to care
 - ⇒ Congress should require CMS and CMMI to further test value-based purchasing (VBP) programs in nursing homes.
- 5. Equity Among Racial and Ethnic Groups Must be a Policy Priority**
- There are significant, persistent racial and ethnic disparities in nursing homes, as well as disparities related to sexual and gender identity (minoritized populations).
 - Action Step:
 - ⇒ Congress must direct HHS to develop an overall health equity strategy for nursing homes that includes defining, measuring, evaluating, and intervening on disparities in how and to whom nursing home care is delivered.
- 6. We Must Incentivize Adoption of Certified Electronic Health Records and Promote Interoperability in Nursing Homes**
- There are significant structural disparities among nursing homes that limit exchange of important clinical data and interoperability, placing residents at risk.
 - Action Steps:
 - ⇒ Congress must direct the ONC and CMS to develop and report measures for HIT adoption and interoperability
 - ⇒ Congress must direct CMS and HRSA to provide financial support for workforce training to promote effective use of technology.

Moving Forward Coalition committees are holding their first meetings in September 2022. We intend to follow up with the House Select Subcommittee after January 2023 with detailed action plan outlines and other work that will be done in the next few months.

We are eager to discuss these and other recommendations in more detail and look forward to continuing our dialogue with you and other Congressional leaders. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of our Coalition.

Regards,



Alice Bonner, Chair, Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition
<https://movingforwardcoalition.org/>