

May 24, 2023

The Honorable Bob Casey, Jr.  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging  
G41 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Braun  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging  
628 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510


Dear Chairman Casey and Ranking Member Braun:

As advocates for our nation's 1.1 million nursing home residents, we thank you for convening the May 18, 2023, hearing, "Residents at Risk: The Strained Nursing Home Inspection System and the Need to Improve Oversight, Transparency, and Accountability." The hearing revealed a crisis in America's nursing homes brought on by state survey agencies experiencing debilitating staffing shortages. We are grateful to both of you for drawing attention to this matter, and we offer our support to help remedy this problem.

State survey agencies are critical to the health and well-being of nursing home residents. They are charged with ensuring nursing homes operate according to state and federal regulations. They respond to resident complaints and have broad authority to take decisive action to protect residents from harm. The majority's report "Uninspected and Neglected" details what happens to nursing home residents when state survey agencies cannot do their jobs: residents suffer, and poor care and resident abuse go unaddressed. The critical role of state survey agencies cannot be overstated.

The majority's report reveals a stark reality in our nation. State surveyors are overworked and underpaid. This fact has resulted in high levels of burnout and staff turnover. It is unacceptable that 1 in 4 nursing homes has not undergone a statutorily mandated annual inspection within the prescribed time. These delays place our most vulnerable citizens at risk of harm. Witness testimony revealed an over-taxed system that is harming nursing home residents and perpetuating the staffing crisis at state survey agencies.

Strong and decisive actions must be taken to remedy this dire situation. We concur with the majority report's recommendations and urge Congress to take the recommended steps in the report. Nursing home residents suffered disproportionately during the COVID-19 pandemic when nearly 200,000 residents died. We must act now to ensure the catastrophic events of COVID-19 do not recur and that residents can rely on the state survey agencies to consistently and promptly hold nursing homes accountable for meeting quality standards.



We were heartened to hear both of you agree that this is a critical issue and that steps must be taken to address the crisis in state survey agencies. We urge you to work together to ensure nursing home residents are protected and safe. We look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR)  
Center for Medicare Advocacy  
The Geriatric Circle: Long Term Care Experts  
Justice in Aging  
Long Term Care Community Coalition  
Michigan Elder Justice Initiative  
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care