



October 14, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you today on behalf of the one in 50 Americans who rely on the 300 Lutheran health and human services providers throughout the United States that comprise the Lutheran Services in America network. With our active presence in over 1,400 communities in 45 states as seen [on this map](#), our work is critically important in improving the lives of Americans with the greatest need from seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities to children, youth and families, and people experiencing homelessness. I ask you to help us continue this important work by supporting several key provisions in the broad “human infrastructure” bill being considered under budget reconciliation.

Lutheran social ministry organizations are deeply embedded in communities across the country where we have provided services for over 150 years. We are on the front lines caring for people during this unprecedented time, amid an ongoing pandemic and acute workforce shortages. Several provisions which are currently included or are being considered for this package would help address the workforce crisis and in turn, would enable services to continue or be expanded for people in communities across the country.

Currently, providers are experiencing the worst workforce shortage we have seen for direct care staff—either prior to or during the height of the pandemic. Many organizations are reducing the number of people they serve or are unable to meet the demand for services because of workforce shortages. This is particularly a problem in rural communities: some rural programs or providers may close due to insufficient staffing, exacerbating an already limited set of services in rural areas.

Therefore, I ask that you support a final bill that includes the following:

- **\$250 billion for home and community-based services (HCBS) for older adults and people with disabilities.** Fully funding this investment would enable health and human services providers to expand services and eliminate the nationwide waitlist of 850,000 older adults and people with disabilities so they can receive needed services in their homes and communities. This would also help address the workforce shortage, for example, through increased wages and benefits for direct care workers. Finally, it would allow expansion of the Money Follows the Person program and for older adults transitioning from acute care settings to their homes to receive the services needed to prevent rehospitalization such as transportation, nutrition, and more. To achieve all these goals, it is very important that lawmakers fully fund our nation’s commitment to HCBS.
- **\$1.48 billion for grants to recruit and retain direct care workers.** Making this funding available to nonprofit entities with experience in aging and disability will help recruit and retain direct care workers, through strategies such as raising wages and creating training opportunities to help address the direct care workforce shortage.



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- **Provisions of the WORK NOW Act (S. 740/H.R. 1987).** This \$50 billion grant program will provide nonprofit health and human services organizations funding to pay wages, salaries and benefits to retain staff, meet the greater demand for services, and hire unemployed workers.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented our nation a multitude of challenges, it has also presented the opportunity to make an unprecedented investment in the direct care workforce who have been the frontline heroes during the pandemic. This essential workforce helps ensure that older adults and people with disabilities have the opportunity to thrive and live with dignity and respect. For these urgent reasons, we strongly urge you to support the provisions noted above.

Thank you in advance for giving your time and attention to this important issue. Our 300 Lutheran social ministry organizations and the one in 50 Americans we serve each year are counting on you.

Respectfully,

Charlotte Haberaecker
President and CEO