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May 19, 2020

Office of the Governor  
Statehouse  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2797

Dear Governor Holcomb:

On behalf of our 820,000 AARP Indiana members and all older Hoosiers, thank you for all that you are doing to help protect Hoosiers during this public health crisis. We appreciate your commitment to transparency through the many documents posted on Indiana's COVID-19 website ([www.coronavirus.in.gov](http://www.coronavirus.in.gov)), and through updates at your press briefings where you encourage Hoosiers to continue hunkering down as much as possible to slow the spread of coronavirus throughout our state. We know that this virus is still going to be with us for some time and as we move forward together, we must acknowledge the challenges that older Hoosiers will continue to face in the months ahead.

While severe health impacts of COVID-19 can occur across ages, the data has shown COVID-19 disproportionately impacts older adults worldwide. Sadly, Indiana is no different. Over 90 percent of Hoosiers who have died from the virus are over 60. The data becomes more heartbreaking when you see what's happened to our most vulnerable citizens – those living in long-term care facilities. As of May 19, there have been 732 deaths in long-term care facilities, which represent approximately 45 percent of the state's total number of COVID-19 deaths. Statewide, 212 long-term care facilities have had at least one positive case and 129 long-term care facilities have had at least one death.

It was with these challenging statistics in mind that we have been engaging in conversations with not only your office, but with the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) regarding ways to assist individuals in long-term care facilities and their families during these unprecedented times. We are appreciative of the discussions that have occurred thus far and we are working with everyone involved in the process, including the Indiana Health Care Association/Indiana Center for Assisted Living (IHCA/INCAL) to ensure that residents and their families have information and resources, as well as answers to questions about what to do if they do not receive information about their loved one or are concerned about their safety.

During these discussions we have expressed our support for public reporting of the incidences of COVID-19 infections and deaths by facility, but ISDH has chosen to report only aggregate statewide data for Indiana's long-term care facilities. We are pleased with the recently released guidelines

AARP  
Real Possibilities

from ISDH that provide residents and their designated representatives daily updates on confirmed cases of COVID-19 among residents and staff. This is a step toward much-needed transparency. But it is clear that more must be done to inform residents, families, and the public about COVID-19 cases and deaths in facilities.

You have stated many times during your briefings that Indiana must stay ahead of COVID-19, and there is a constant need to reexamine and adjust Indiana's public health policies due to the rapidly changing landscape. AARP Indiana believes the time has come to make one of those adjustments.

As Indiana further addresses the impact of COVID-19, we urge you to consider the following policy recommendation:

### **Transparency of Information on COVID-19 Cases**

AARP Indiana urges the state to publicly release the names of long-term care facilities with confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths among residents and staff on a daily basis.

During the current public health crisis, this information is essential to protect residents in facilities and for families to make safe and informed choices about where their loved ones will receive care. These choices include which rehab facility a hospital will discharge a person to, which assisted living facility is safest to move into, or if a family opts to bring a loved one home for care. Transparency is also critical for people to know what is happening in their communities and have trust in their leaders. This information helps ensure that adequate supplies, such as virus tests and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), are deployed to facilities that need them the most.

Some long-term care facilities have released COVID-19 information on their own. American Senior Communities, Otterbein Senior Life, the Hearth at Stones Crossing in Greenwood, and Trilogy Health Services are all discussing, reporting, and/or updating their total number of COVID-19 positive cases, as well as deaths from virus complications. Recently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced new requirements for nursing homes to report certain cases to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state, and local health departments. Some local health departments are publicly reporting this data by facility. However, this reporting is inconsistent and may be unhelpful for many persons looking for information. Hoosiers would be better served if there was an easily accessible link that provides daily COVID-19 positive cases, as well as deaths by facility on the Indiana COVID-19 Dashboard. This would ensure that Hoosiers are receiving accurate and consistent data on a daily basis.

As this letter began by applauding your commitment to transparency, we want to end by emphasizing our sincere appreciation for your ongoing actions to remain transparent in your communications and your continued collaboration. This open communication is paramount to Indiana's families with loved ones residing or working in long-term care facilities.

As our AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer Nancy A. LeMond recently said, "We are stronger and more effective when we are working

together, not creating divisions. It is a time for all of us to be our best selves and pull together to defeat this common enemy.”

It is essential that Indiana provides as much information as possible to long-term care residents and their loved ones, especially during this public health emergency. We stand ready to help in any way we can through the valuable perspective of Indiana’s long-term care consumers and families. We look forward to hearing from you or your staff. If you have any questions, please contact me at (317) 319-8621 or [swaddle@arp.org](mailto:swaddle@arp.org) or you may contact our Legislative Director, Ambre Marr at (317) 801-2584 or [amarr@arp.org](mailto:amarr@arp.org).

We are #INthistogether!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Waddle".

Sarah Waddle  
State Director, AARP Indiana

cc: Indiana State Department of Health Commissioner, Dr. Kristina Box  
Indiana Family and Social Services Administration Secretary, Dr. Jennifer Sullivan