Message to House Energy and Commerce Committee Members

September 10, 2021

Dear Committee on Energy and Commerce Members and Staff,

LeadingAge represents more than 5,000 nonprofit aging services providers and other mission-minded organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside our members and 38 state partners, we use applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building to make America a better place to grow old. Our membership encompasses the entire continuum of aging services including Medicare and Medicaid certified nursing homes, assisted living, home care, life plan communities, and HUD-financed affordable senior housing.

We are writing to express our strong support for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Committee's legislative recommendation for budget reconciliation, included in the Build Back Better Act introduced earlier this week and scheduled for mark-up on Monday, September 13, 2021.

We strongly urge that Subtitle G – Medicaid legislative recommendations be amended to include the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) provisions from Section 206, Enhanced Funding to Support Staffing and Quality Care in Nursing Facilities, included in The Nursing Home Improvement and Accountability Act of 2021, which is summarized below:

***Enhanced Funding to Support Staffing and Quality Care in Nursing Facilities**. Section 206 provides states with a temporary enhanced federal Medicaid match to fund certain workforce and care improvements. Beginning the first full calendar quarter one year after enactment, states may receive an increase to their Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) for nursing facility services over six years to expand and improve nursing facility staffing, including by improving wages and benefits. Funds must also be used to support and improve resident care, including by expanding person-centered models of care. As a condition of these federal dollars, states must regularly update Medicaid payment rates for nursing facility services through a transparent process involving meaningful input from stakeholders, pass a portion of rate increases through to worker wages, and adopt new training resources and opportunities for staff. States must also improve and streamline options counseling for individuals seeking care. Participating states must report certain information to CMS, including wages and benefits provided to nursing facility staff. States may receive a three-percentage point increase to their federal match for four years, two-point increase for one year, and a one-point increase in the final year.*

These provisions reflect the critical importance of aging services and the older adults we serve to the infrastructure of our economic, social and healthcare systems, and we urge that they be included in any final reconciliation package. Furthermore, additional resources are necessary to improve quality of care and help long-term care providers deal with the significant workforce shortage due to the strain of hiring qualified and trained workers.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to speak with you further about this critical request.

Sincerely,

Ruth Katz