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March 20, 2020

Governor Mike DeWine, Lt. Governor Jon Husted
77 S. High St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted:

We continue to be impressed by your Administration's responsiveness and transparency in the face of unprecedented threats and how rapidly you've been able to move Ohio in a direction which will protect our most vulnerable.

This letter makes three requests related to senior housing in the state of Ohio, which includes both senior affordable housing for low-income older adults, as well as senior independent living communities.

Include Housing Operators, Staff Contractors as "Essential" Personnel

- We encourage the Administration to ensure housing property managers, administrative staff, maintenance technicians and service coordinators are counted in any list of Ohio's "essential" personnel and workers, both for the purposes of accessing childcare through the pandemic childcare centers, as well as any future "shelter in place" order that might further restrict Ohioans' ability to report to work and move about their community.
- We are also concerned that construction currently underway could be slowed by a future order to "shelter in place." The nature of construction work poses a low risk for transmission of COVID-19, and slowing down this process poses a large financial risk because of tax-credit delivery penalties.

Expand Services & Supports in Senior Housing

- We request that the Administration expand the availability of appropriate services and supports for those Ohioans residing in independent living, particularly for those who may rely on family members or other informal caregivers. We remain concerned that older Ohioans will be increasingly isolated over the coming weeks, and that essential services like personal care, meals and food delivery will be disrupted as family and loved ones rightly limit their visits. LeadingAge Ohio encourages the Administration to ramp up programs like PASSPORT to accommodate the diminished role of informal caregivers. This can be done by removing caps on services and/or expanding eligibility criteria.

Specifically, PASSPORT's enhanced community living service is designed in such a way that further limits the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission by limiting the number of professional caregivers in a single senior housing site. The Department of Aging could

exploit this design feature and quickly scale the program to more senior housing sites across the state.

Furthermore, as older Ohioans heed the Governor's counsel to stay home, we must ensure they can receive the essential goods, supplies and serves to keep them there. Our members are willing and able to deploy their essential staff, including service coordinators for those buildings where they are assigned, in distributing goods and supplies to residents, but need assistance in terms of delivery of those items to communities across the state.

Finally, not every senior housing community has an assigned service coordinator. Our national organization, LeadingAge, has requested \$300 million to place service coordinators in senior affordable housing nationwide, and we encourage you to echo this request to Congress. Furthermore, Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging are uniquely positioned inasmuch as they have the established expertise and community relationships to respond to a wide variety of needs. They should be looked to as leaders for community-based solutions to support older Ohioans who choose to shelter in place.

Discourage Visitation for Congregate/Shared Entrance Senior Housing

LeadingAge Ohio members have already adopted restrictive visitation policies for their senior housing environments. However, they do not have the ability to police the actions of residents of their independent living/housing communities, so any policy they create is difficult to enforce. As you are relying on the good sense and neighborly spirit of Ohioans, so our members rely on the good sense and neighborly spirit of their residents to keep all of them safe. Senior housing operators would greatly appreciate the Administration's help in directly counseling their residents to reduce visitation by family and loved ones and reduce interactions between residents in order to keep their communities safe. This could be done by mention in one of the daily press conferences, or via a letter from the Director of Health.

Finally, we appreciate the compassion and concern which you demonstrate for older Ohioans. It is clear through your communication that the restrictions you have had to impose come from a deep-seated love for Ohio and the people who call it home, and we commend you for your steady and thoughtful leadership.

As ever, please know that Ohio's aging services providers are alongside you in the urgent work to flatten the curve, and save the lives of those we care for.

Respectfully,



Kathryn L. Brod
President/CEO