

PROVIDER RELIEF FUND

To Continue Providing High-Quality Patient Care Long-Term Care Pharmacies Need COVID-19 Relief

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term care (LTC) pharmacies have provided uninterrupted, life-saving care for residents of nursing homes and assisted living communities. Residents and staff in LTC facilities have been devastated by COVID-19, which made timely access to prescription drugs even more essential for residents who suffer disproportionately from chronic conditions and complex co-morbidities, limitations in activities of daily living, and cognitive impairments.

Congress and federal agencies have taken historic steps to provide necessary financial relief to health care providers hit hard by the pandemic, with LTC facilities rightly receiving more than \$12 billion in assistance from the Provider Relief Fund (PRF) established in the CARES Act. Unfortunately, despite LTC pharmacies' crucial role in supporting the very same vulnerable residents, HHS has denied them equitable and proportionate economic relief. The Senior Care Pharmacy Coalition (SCPC) is urging the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to prioritize LTC pharmacies in the next distribution of PRF funds.

LTC Pharmacies Play an Essential Role in Senior Care

The typical LTC pharmacy dispenses and delivers thousands of prescriptions every day as an active member of each patient's care planning team. LTC pharmacies also provide direct care services to patients and their families, reducing unnecessary medication use, and integrate medication therapy management into resident treatment pathways. These services are greatly needed for LTC residents who typically require 12-13 medications daily to maintain quality of life. LTC pharmacies provide prescription drugs and patient care services in LTC facilities and other congregate living settings for both seniors and younger adults with disabilities and LTC pharmacies are available 24/7/365—all to improve patient health outcomes.

Since December, LTC pharmacies have taken on an additional service of administering COVID-19 vaccines. SCPC LTC pharmacy members have efficiently distributed hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 vaccines and managed the rigorous administrative requirements necessary in LTC facilities across the country, an effort that has dramatically reduced COVID-19 infection and death rates among facility residents.

The average 11% drop in revenue for LTC pharmacies mirrors the 13% decline in occupancy reported for LTC facilities last year.

Support for LTC Pharmacies Improves Patient Lives

During the pandemic, LTC pharmacies have faced an onslaught of financial challenges with initial revenue loss as much as 30% and continued losses hovering at 11% of pre-pandemic revenue. Simultaneously, LTC pharmacies are witnessing 10% higher operating costs due to personal protective equipment (PPE), social distancing, and other COVID-19 safety requirements. SCPC estimates these adverse consequences will continue through most, if not all, of 2021. Despite these essential services, LTC pharmacies have not received the relief necessary to maintain continuous resident access to prescription drugs and related patient care.

The PRF was established to offset the economic impact of the pandemic on health care providers like LTC pharmacies; however, many LTC pharmacies were denied relief or received funds only to have HHS recoup those funds without explanation. Future proportional PRF allocations would cost no more than \$370 million, to provide a lifeline to LTC pharmacies, just as the fund has done for LTC facilities that serve the same population.

SCPC and its members are calling on HHS and Congress to assure that LTC pharmacies receive fair and proportionate relief in the next distribution from the Provider Relief Fund. LTC pharmacies and the residents they serve deserve no less.

