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SENATOR

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES
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AGRICULTURE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Dear Ms. [REDACTED],

Thank you for contacting me regarding critical health and economic needs for people with disabilities, older adults, front-line workers and family caregivers. The pandemic has been particularly difficult for the disability community, and it has challenged Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) providers' ability to afford and provide care to older adults and people with disabilities. It is more important than ever that our home care workers, nurses, doctors and other front-line medical workers have the essential resources to protect themselves, their patients, and their own families. I have championed priorities in the Senate that would bring much-needed relief and support to the disability community including funding for HCBS, paid leave for the HCBS workforce, and the recent passage of my legislation, *S. 3220 - the Ensuring Access to Direct Support Professionals Act*, which allows Medicaid to cover Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) during short-term hospital stays.

Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) are types of person-centered care delivered in the home and community. HCBS programs address the needs of people with functional limitations who need assistance with everyday activities, like getting dressed or bathing. The pandemic has made it difficult for older adults and people with disabilities to receive HCBS, and it has placed a heavy burden on Medicaid home health agencies (HHAs) and HCBS providers to adapt to costly, resource-intensive models of practice that protect their high-risk patient population. On August 24, 2020, I led a request to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to ensure HCBS providers have the critical resources such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and proper reimbursement needed to continue providing care to older adults and people with disabilities, two communities particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

I am also proud cosponsor of the *Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act* which would address critical health and economic needs for people with disabilities, older adults, front-line workers and family caregivers. This bill would provide funding to ensure that older adults and people with disabilities who have a right to care at home or in their community are able to receive it. States need these additional, new dollars to minimize waiting lists for home and community-based services and to provide wage increases as well as overtime pay and paid sick, medical and family leave to home health workers. It would also increase funding for nursing home surveys to promote infection control and make sure older adults and people with disabilities have healthy food and other services at home.

I have made supporting the HCBS workforce a priority during the pandemic response, and on March 27th, 2020 my legislation, *S. 3220 - the Ensuring Access to Direct Support Professionals Act*, passed into law as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the third coronavirus emergency package to support Americans, health care providers, and small businesses. I will continue to prioritize funding and resources for the essential workforce that makes independent living for people with disabilities possible.

The global pandemic that we are experiencing is of a magnitude unlike any seen in our lifetimes. Please know I am committed to protecting the health, economic security, and well-being of our older adults and people with disabilities, their families, and the workforce that supports them in future COVID-19 legislation.

Thank you again for writing to express your concerns, and I hope that you keep in touch with my office in the future. For more information on this and other important issues, please visit my website at <http://gillibrand.senate.gov>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator