



September 30, 2020

Governor Andrew Cuomo, Chair  
Governor Asa Hutchinson, Vice Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 N. Capitol St NW, Ste. 267  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Governors Cuomo and Hutchinson:

On Sept 28, 2020, President Trump made an announcement that 100 million Abbott Laboratories BinaxNOW<sup>TM</sup> rapid point-of-care tests will be sent to our Nation's Governors. As the trade association that represents the senior living industry, the American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA) seeks your support by recommending to the states that they prioritize this industry for access to these tests as they become available.

ASHA represents the owners and operators who provide housing and care in assisted living, independent living, memory care, and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) to those most vulnerable to COVID-19 in our society. These operators have been serving on the front lines of this pandemic since late February-early March, working tirelessly and compassionately to keep safe the almost 1.9 million residents who call "senior living" home and the approximately 1 million employees who serve them.

While we anxiously await the distribution of a vaccine, the testing of residents and associates, the practice of social distancing, the use of PPE, and enhanced sanitization protocols, are the necessary tools that a senior living community can use to combat the spread of COVID-19. However, in the early days of the pandemic, our industry was largely overlooked as we sought access to these much-needed resources. We implore our nation's governors to not let that happen with the allocation of the rapid point-of-care tests. The Administration announced that tests were being sent to 5500 assisted living communities which is most helpful. However, there are approximately 21,000 senior living communities in the United States, and all are in need of these tests.

These tests can be a game changer in the battle against COVID-19, and prioritizing senior living communities with access can accelerate that positive change. Here is why:

- The average resident of a senior living community is 85 years old and is typically affected by multiple comorbidities, making them significantly more vulnerable to further complications from COVID-19 exposure.
- The incredible people working on the front lines in senior living communities are the reason the residents have a fighting chance against COVID-19. They do their jobs against the backdrop of supply and testing shortages, as well as worker disruptions because of childcare needs, illnesses, and even fear. And yet they can carry and transfer the virus asymptotically to a resident in an otherwise COVID-19 free community.

- The ability to test staff regularly will significantly decrease the likelihood for infection and save lives. As communities struggle to re-open to family and other visitors, the need for such rapid result testing is critical to ensure that visitors are virus-free before entering the property.

Current PCR tests come with a turnaround time of 2-4 days or longer and a price tag of \$100 or more. This is cost prohibitive and not effective to address the asymptomatic employee. By contrast, the Abbott antigen test takes 15 minutes to produce a result and costs approximately \$5 per test. As indicated above, such a move represents a transformational moment in our efforts to keep seniors and employees safe. With the tools to keep people safe and out of the hospital, senior living residents and the overall health care system benefits.

The senior living industry is committed to continuing to do whatever it takes to keep our residents and staff safe. We simply ask that you recommend that the governors prioritize this industry so we can continue this great work.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Schless".

David Schless  
President  
American Seniors Housing Association

cc: State Governors