

CAPITOL CONNECTION



Virtual Fly-In Participants Speak Up to Be Heard in Congress

AFTER THE RECENT “SENIOR LIVING STRONG” VIRTUAL FLY-IN

campaign to advocate for the industry with Congress, ASHA surveyed a handful of the participants to share their reactions and hear why direct talks with legislators are so successful.

Here are comments from Lynne Katzmann, Founder & CEO, Juniper Communities; Marcus Breuer, CEO, Touchmark; Christian Sweetser, CFO, Silverado; Severine Petras, CEO & Co-Founder, Priority Life Care; Greg Roderick, President & CEO, Frontier Management; and Don Feltman, President & CEO, Artis Senior Living.



ASHA highlighted the Senior Living Strong Congressional fly-in with policymakers and their staff by placing targeted ads in *POLITICO*, *The Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Washington Examiner* and *WUSA 9* (local news).

Did speaking directly with a Member of Congress or the staff help make the case that senior living should be prioritized for financial relief to help cover the industry's COVID-19 efforts?

Katzmann: It was important to speak to them directly. We are largely a private-pay business and have not been considered part of the care continuum. I think now they understand that we are part of that care continuum. While we don't receive a share of Medicare or Medicaid revenue, if any, we have a big impact on the use of those services. If we can keep people healthy and out of the hospital, we save the government money. Part of our discussion was to get legislators to see the value of giving us Provider Relief Funds.

Breuer: Many in Congress don't know the difference between seniors housing and nursing homes. Nursing homes and hospitals have received a great deal of assistance, but private-pay seniors housing has not. It was important to point that out directly to legislators.

Sweetser: We were well received. The legislators were surprised to learn that we care for such a large number of seniors. We are taking care of highly vulnerable adults, similar to those in nursing homes. I tried to impress on the legislators that

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we did the right thing last year by restricting move-ins. But we were losing occupancy without additional revenue. There's not a lot of flexibility on the expense side. We can't just cut back staff. Our residents need assistance. There's not a lot of flexibility on the cost side. That's what I emphasized on the call.

Did you think the Members of Congress and staff were interested to hear and learn about the industry? Did you feel like they were listening to you?

Petras: I did feel they were interested. They gave us a good amount of time to explain our situation and why our industry needed support.

Katzmann: Post COVID, they understand that we are an important part of the healthcare continuum. But they needed an education on how we are different from nursing homes and I think they were open to that. They were listening. They know that serving older adults is critical and the work we're doing in senior living is important. Older people use a large portion of governmental healthcare resources. So how we fare is important to everyone.

Sweetser: Yes, they were listening. Our industry has grown rapidly and because our residents pay their own way, the public doesn't realize we are providing this incredible service. Functional status of the resident is the biggest indicator of health outcomes. The best way to maintain function is with support and that's what assisted living does.

Will you participate in future ASHA advocacy efforts? Will you reach out to your congressional representatives in the future to talk about these and other issues? Will you invite them to visit your community when it is safe to do so?

Roderick: Absolutely, I participated in ASHA's advocacy efforts last year,

this year and I'll do it next year. It's something I feel strongly about.

Feltman: Yes, participation in advocacy is an opportunity to educate legislators. In one conversation, I walked through how assisted living residents today would have previously been in a nursing home. Assisted living is lower cost and allows individuals to use their funds for a good quality of life. Without assisted living, more people would be in nursing homes. They would spend down their assets faster and access the Medicaid program sooner which results in higher Medicaid expenditures. That resonated with them from a practical standpoint.

Breuer: Yes, communication with legislators is critical. We have communities in 10 different states. It helps to have one message about our needs as an industry. I've found the Members of Congress and Senators to be down to earth and interested in our message.

How important is it for ASHA to continue its ongoing federal advocacy for the industry?

Roderick: It's very important for ASHA to continue its advocacy at the federal level. The effort connects those of us who care for frail seniors with their representatives. They are influential when it comes to distributing funds and frail seniors need a voice. Without ASHA's involvement and the connections it creates, our industry would be more fragile.

Breuer: ASHA does a good job. There always has to be a balance between regulation and the safety of residents. A growing burden of rules and regulations can make the product too costly for the resident. We don't want to be so over-regulated that we can't offer our service at an affordable price. Sometimes a law sounds good on paper but it's tough to implement and the only alternative is to pass the costs on to the customer.

Feltman: Advocacy is crucial, particularly now. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services still has



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GREG
RODERICK

President & CEO
Frontier Management



CHRISTIAN
SWEETSER

CFO
Silverado

funding available and senior living has received a relatively small percentage to help fight the virus. I've heard of a number of communities that may have to close their doors because expenses are running so high. That's a concern. And we are facing the age wave in front of us. We have to make sure we have supportive services available as they are needed.

Petras: It's very important to advocate with Congress to have our voices heard as an industry. Not just for our seniors we serve, but also for our employees who we are hoping to provide with good health benefits and competitive wages. Working together as an industry, I feel really helps show how great an impact we have in the politicians' back yards.

What other issues are likely to be front and center for ASHA in its advocacy beyond accessing additional Provider Relief Funds?

Sweetser: Seniors housing should be recognized as a critical component of the care continuum. According to figures from the CDC, 80 percent of the variation in health outcomes can be traced back to the social determinants of health. These include housing, access to food, lifestyle and support from a caregiver. That is what seniors housing does.

Feltman: Most people have only one or two times in their lives when they deal with senior living. It's not a day in, day out part of life. So, anything we can do to educate our state and federal legislators about the benefits of assisted living in the overall healthcare spectrum will help advance our industry.

Any other comments you can share about ASHA's legislative efforts?

Sweetser: I've been in industry 20 years, and this has been ASHA's finest hour. As a group representing the industry, ASHA has been incredible over the last year. ASHA helped us access the first round of Provider

Relief Funds and created awareness of seniors housing with legislators.

Roderick: The Members of Congress change regularly. ASHA has been good at educating new members about senior living.

Feltman: Getting our legislators motivated to encourage HHS to consider the plight of senior living is key. HHS may be distracted by the situation at the southern border. So, it will be important to continue to reach out and follow up.

Katzmann: ASHA has done a particularly good job at building relationships with key Members of Congress and creating an open-door environment, so the industry has a voice on Capitol Hill. ASHA knows the representatives and they have never turned us down if we want to talk with them. That's very important.

**SENIOR LIVING
STRONG ADS
GENERATED:**

Impressions
331,880

Reach
73,285



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WITHIN ^ DAYS

Provider Relief Fund Sign-On Support

ASHA's advocacy was instrumental in securing support for two bi-partisan sign-on letters generated in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. The Senate letter, led by Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), was signed by 25 U.S. Senators. The House letter, led by Representative Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Representative Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH), was signed by 59 U.S. House Members. Both letters were sent to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra, requesting an equitable and targeted allocation of remaining PRF funds to senior living providers. In addition to many of these offices contacted by ASHA members, fly in advocates also visited with the offices of Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Senator Schumer, Senator Lankford, Senator Daines and many more.

Senate Letter Signatories

Michael Bennet (D-CO)	Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)	Tim Scott (R-SC)
Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)	Deb Fischer (R-NE)	Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ)
Tom Carper (D-DE)	Bill Hagerty (R-TN)	Tina Smith (D-MN)
Bill Cassidy (R-LA)	Mark Kelly (D-AZ)	Jon Tester (D-MT)
Susan Collins (R-ME)	James Lankford (R-OK)	Thom Tillis (R-NC)
Chris Coons (D-DE)	Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)	Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)
John Cornyn (R-TX)	Roger Marshall (R-KS)	Todd Young (R-IN)
Kevin Cramer (R-ND)	Jerry Moran (R-KS)	
Steve Daines (R-MT)	Alex Padilla (D-CA)	

House Letter Signatories

Troy Balderson (R-OH-12)	Diana Harshbarger (R-TN-01)	Joe Neguse (D-CO-02)
Nanette Barragan (D-CA-44)	Jahana Hayes (D-CT-05)	Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ-01)
Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12)	Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18)	Jimmy Panetta (D-CA-20)
Dan Bishop (R-NC-09)	Chris Jacobs (R-NY-27)	Bill Posey (R-IN-08)
Sanford Bishop (D-GA-02)	Sara Jacobs (D-CA-53)	David Rouzer (R-NC-07)
Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE-AL)	Hank Johnson (D-GA-04)	John Rutherford (R-FL-04)
David Cicilline (D-RI-01)	John Katko (R-NY-24)	Kurt Schrader (D-OR-05)
Emmanuel Cleaver (D-MO-05)	Fred Keller (R-PA-12)	Terri Sewell (D-AL-07)
Steve Cohen (D-TN-09)	Derek Kilmer (D-WA-06)	Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07)
Tom Cole (R-OK-04)	Jake LaTurner (R-KS-02)	Haley Stevens (D-MI-11)
Charlie Crist (D-FL-13)	Barbara Lee (D-CA-13)	Marilyn Strickland (D-WA-10)
Dwight Evans (D-PA-03)	Billy Long (R-MO-07)	Rashida Tlaib (D-MI-13)
Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01)	Frank Lucas (R-OK-03)	Paul Tonko (D-NY-20)
Bill Foster (D-IL-11)	Stephen Lynch (D-MA-08)	Lori Trahan (D-MA-03)
Virginia Foxx (R-NC-05)	Tom Malinowski (D-NJ-07)	Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ-02)
Andrew Garbarino (D-NY-02)	Mike McCaul (R-TX-10)	Nydia Velázquez (D-NY-07)
Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH-16)	Jim McGovern (D-MA-02)	Peter Welch (D-VT-AL)
Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX-15)	Peter Meijer (R-MI-03)	Nikema Williams (D-GA-05)
Lance Gooden (R-TX-05)	Markwayne Mullin (R-OK-02)	John Yarmuth (D-KY-03)
Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-03)	Stephanie Murphy (D-FL-07)	

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For access to all links referenced in this *Capitol Connection*, please login to the "Members Area" of the ASHA website (www.ashaliving.org)

2021 SH PAC Campaign Update

As of May, 3, 2021, the SH PAC has raised over 75% of the 2021 goal! Of that, 144 individuals from 82 companies have contributed \$399,125 to the SH PAC.



Numbers as of May 3, 2021.

asha
American Seniors Housing
ASSOCIATION

To receive login credentials, contact Meghan Bertonni at megs@ashaliving.org.