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The Honorable Rick Scott  
Senator & Chair, Senate Special Committee  
on Aging  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
Senator & Ranking Member, Senate Special  
Committee on Aging  
478 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and Members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging,

On behalf of the [Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition](https://www.movingforwardcoalition.org), thank you for holding the recent hearing, "Preparing for Disasters: Unique Challenges Facing Older Americans."<sup>1</sup> We commend the Senate Special Committee on Aging's (the Committee's) ongoing commitment to supporting older adults during disasters. We write to urge the Committee to ensure that the Nation's 1.2 million nursing home residents and 1.5 million staff are explicitly considered and included in all phases of federal and state emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.<sup>2,3</sup> This inclusion must be grounded in a broad understanding of "disasters" that encompasses weather events, pandemics, cyberattacks, and other public health emergencies. Furthermore, we strongly encourage the Committee to formalize relationships between nursing homes, local, county, and state-level public health and emergency management departments, and to scale existing models of integration.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the unique vulnerabilities that both nursing home residents and staff face in emergency situations and demonstrated the devastating consequences of failing to integrate nursing homes into emergency management systems.<sup>4</sup> This understanding informed the release of the 2022 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Report (NASEM), *The National Imperative to Improve Nursing Home Quality*, which

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<sup>1</sup> *United States Senate Special Committee on Aging*. "Preparing for Disasters: Unique Challenges Facing Older Americans." Hearing, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. "Nursing Home Data." *CMS.gov*, 2024, <https://data.cms.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Industry at a Glance: Nursing and Residential Care Facilities: NAICS 623." *BLS.gov*, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag623.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Grabowski, David C., and Jonathan Gruber. "Nursing Homes, COVID-19, and the U.S. Policy Response." *Health Affairs*, vol. 39, no. 8, 2020, pp. 1287–1292. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00764>.

serves as a comprehensive strategy for improving nursing home quality and includes specific recommendations related to emergency management.<sup>5</sup> The Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition, which includes residents, providers, families, nursing home quality experts and advocates, launched in 2022 to implement practical solutions to the recommendations proposed by the NASEM report. The Coalition is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation.<sup>6</sup>

As stated above, the Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition urges the Committee to explicitly include nursing homes in all phases of federal and state emergency management, which would advance the goals outlined in the NASEM report. Specifically, we encourage the Committee to work with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that the Emergency Support Functions of the National Response Framework include the following: (1) clarification that nursing homes are included in emergency support functions; (2) requirements for state and local emergency management documents and plans to contain specific guidance for nursing homes during an emergency; and (3) revisions to include residents of nursing homes as part of the target group of “individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.”<sup>7</sup> These minor revisions will help to prevent avoidable tragedies related to emergencies in nursing homes and will ensure that the lives of nursing home residents and staff are considered in all phases of emergency management.

Additionally, the Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition urges the Committee to identify federal mechanisms to formalize relationships between nursing homes, local, county, and state-level public health and emergency management departments, as recommended by the NASEM report.<sup>8</sup> The Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition is working to advance this recommendation through a pilot initiative supported by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to foster collaboration between emergency management and long-term care stakeholders in Michigan. This effort brings together state and local emergency planners, nursing home representatives, long-term care ombudsman, and public health officials to improve coordination, communication, and readiness. The Michigan pilot serves as a model for how states can close longstanding gaps while informing scalable national strategies that ensure coordinated and integrated approaches to emergency management. We encourage the Committee to work with the Department of Health and Human Services and FEMA to identify

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<sup>5</sup> *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The National Imperative to Improve Nursing Home Quality: Honoring Our Commitment to Residents, Families, and Staff.* The National Academies Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26526>.

<sup>6</sup> *The John A. Hartford Foundation.* “Moving Forward Coalition: Implementing Recommendations from the NASEM Report on Nursing Home Quality.” <https://www.johnahartford.org/grants-strategy/moving-forward-coalition>.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency. *National Response Framework*, 5th ed., October 2021. <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/response>.



federal mechanisms—such as CMS requirements—that can help formalize these partnerships in other states.

The Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition stands ready to work in partnership with the Senate Special Committee on Aging to advance these meaningful and achievable policy solutions that will help prevent avoidable adverse events. Together, we can build a more resilient and prepared long-term care infrastructure that protects and supports older adults in times of crisis in all settings. We thank the Committee for its enduring leadership in supporting older adults during emergencies and for your consideration of the unique needs of nursing home residents and staff, as well as pathways for implementing our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alice Bonner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alice Bonner, Chair

The Moving Forward Nursing Home Quality Coalition

