April 6, 2020

The Honorable Doug Burgum  
Governor  
State of North Dakota  
600 E Boulevard Ave  
Bismarck, ND 58502

Dear Governor Burgum,

On behalf of more than 86,000 members of AARP North Dakota, I am writing in regards to concerns that we have heard about in other parts of the nation about rationing health care services and equipment during the Covid-19 outbreak.

At the time of this writing, North Dakota fortunately has not experienced the surge in Covid-19 cases that has led to proposed rationing of services and equipment seen elsewhere. Due to our significant concerns for the health and well-being of individuals receiving care in long term care facilities, as well as in their homes and communities, we have a number of questions that we submit to you:

• What steps has the state taken to ensure that long-term care beneficiaries in home and community based or institutional settings are protected from community exposure to Covid-19?

• What steps has the state taken to ensure nursing homes, assisted living facilities and agency adult foster care providers properly implement their emergency staffing contingency plans and their increased responsibilities to ensure adequate coverage to protect older adults from Covid-19 exposure?

• What steps has the state taken to prevent further community transmission cases from creating clusters of impacted seniors and people with disabilities living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, particularly, has the state taken any steps since the first diagnosed case of Covid-19 was discovered at the Mandan facility?

• What steps has the state taken to ensure that hospital and institutional care discharges can proceed safely and without undue delays?
• What steps has the state taken to ensure that caregivers for beneficiaries receiving long-term services and supports (LTSS) in nursing homes or home and community, based settings are provided with personal protective equipment (PPE)?

• What steps has the state taken to ensure providers comply with CMS and federal guidance regarding enhanced protections and screening for facility visitors and protections for residents and families caregivers?

• What steps has the state taken to ensure adequate staffing exists for beneficiaries receiving LTSS in nursing homes and home and community-based settings?

• Will the state activate the Emergency Management Assistance Compact to ensure, if appropriate, neighboring licensed professionals can, on an emergency basis, address North Dakotans increased health care needs?

As AARP North Dakota’s March 25, letter to you indicated, AARP remains invested in collaborating with the North Dakota Department of Health to encourage the state ensures the timely implementation of virtual visitation so families and caregivers can remain connected to their loved ones receiving long-term care.

As AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer Nancy A. LeaMond recently said, “This virus doesn’t discriminate, and neither should those entrusted with deciding who gets access to health care to treat it. Using age or disability to categorically exclude people from accessing treatment would be discriminatory, and AARP opposes it. Policymakers must take action now to avoid putting patients, families and health care professionals in the untenable position of having to ration health care. We are stronger and more effective when we are working together, not creating divisions. It is a time for all of us to be our best selves and pull together to defeat this common enemy.”

It is a time for all of us to be our best selves and pull together to defeat this common enemy. AARP North Dakota greatly appreciates the state’s efforts to ensure the health and safety of North Dakotans during this challenging time. We stand ready to help in any way that we can. If you have questions, please contact me at jaskvig@aarp.org or 701-989-0129.

Sincerely,

Josh Askvig, State Director
AARP North Dakota

Cc: Mylynn Tuft, North Dakota State Health Officer
Chris Jones, Director North Dakota Department of Human Services