May 11, 2020

Chris Jones
ND Department of Human Services
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505-0001

Dear Chris,

AARP North Dakota, on behalf of our 86,000 members and all older North Dakotans, appreciates the significant efforts the state has undertaken to address the COVID-19 pandemic and would like to thank you for participating in the telephone town hall with Governor Burgum on Wednesday.

We appreciate that the state has publicly released the names of nursing homes, assisted living communities, and other residential care facilities with confirmed COVID-19 cases among residents or staff. We urge the state to continue to engage in this level of transparency by publicly releasing the number of deaths that have resulted because of COVID-19 at nursing homes and other long term care facilities as you and the Governor outlined in our telephone town hall. This transparency is critical for public health and the health and well-being of the residents and staff of these facilities.

As we stated in our previous letters, for residents and their families, remaining connected is essential to their safety and health, and we appreciate the efforts the state and the ND Long Term Care Association and ND Assistive has initiated to ensure virtual visitation between residents and their loved ones is accessible and readily available. As the state rolls out virtual visitation efforts under the newly funded grant from the federal Administration for Community Living (ACL) we would offer our assistance in sharing information about the virtual visitation options that get set up.

Additionally, related to services connections, if the AARP Community Connections resource can be of value we certainly would be happy to identify ways to make it work. To date it has had limited use in ND but it has been successful in other areas of the country. As a reminder it’s an online platform that allows users to organize and find local volunteer groups to help pick up groceries, provide financial assistance, or lend emotional support to neighbors, friends and loved ones. Across the country, these informal mutual aid groups help communities stay connected and care for older adults and others who are at the greatest risk. For more information, visit www.aarpcommunityconnections.org.
AARP North Dakota greatly appreciates the state’s efforts to ensure the health and safety of North Dakotan’s during this challenging time. If you have questions, please contact me at 701-989-0129 or jaskvig@aarp.org.

Sincerely,

Josh Askvig, State Director
AARP North Dakota