

August 28, 2020

The Honorable Steve Bullock  
Governor, the State of Montana  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock:

I write today regarding the lack of reporting of cases and deaths due to COVID-19 in long-term care facilities in Montana and to urge you to make this information publically available without further delay to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and help prevent future loss of life.

As you know, individuals in long-term care facilities are among the most vulnerable in the U.S. of being infected by and dying from the coronavirus. COVID-19 can be lethal to older adults with underlying health conditions and can spread more easily in congregate settings like nursing homes and assisted living facilities. In Montana, outbreaks of COVID-19 in senior care facilities have tragically resulted in at least 200 positive cases and 25 deaths according to news reports;<sup>1</sup> however, the data currently available provides an incomplete picture of the impact of COVID-19 on Montana's senior communities.

According to an August 20, 2020, report from the Kaiser Family Foundation, Montana is only one of four states not reporting cases and deaths due to COVID-19 in long-term care facilities.<sup>2</sup> This lack of reporting causes an information gap and hinders the ability for policy makers to produce comprehensive, effective solutions that will help combat the spread of this virus and prevent future deaths. Transparency around COVID-19 data in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities is critical to inform policy solutions that will help slow the spread, improve senior care, and save lives. AARP has likewise called for increased transparency of COVID-19 data to help identify disparities in health care and bring about better health outcomes for seniors and others disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including Native Americans.<sup>3</sup>

In order to help mitigate the number of lives lost moving forward, I encourage you to make public cases and deaths due to COVID-19 in long-term care facilities by licensure category without further delay. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES  
United States Senator

---

<sup>1</sup> New York Times (August 13, 2020), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-nursing-homes.html>

<sup>2</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "State Reports of Long-Term Care Facility Cases and Deaths Related to COVID-19," (August 20, 2020), available at <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/state-data-and-policy-actions-to-address-coronavirus/#long-term-care-cases-deaths>

<sup>3</sup> AARP (July 29, 2020), available at <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/politics/advocacy/2020/07/200729-aarp-statement-aging-disparities-hearing.pdf>