



Assisted Living  
Federation of America

## POSITION PAPER

### Long Term Care Demand, Affordability And Consumer Choice

**ALFA Urges Senators and Representatives to Include Long Term Care in Any Health Care Reform Legislation Considered by the 111th Congress**

On behalf of the members of the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA), we urge your strong support for the expansion of long term care options for all Americans. ALFA is the largest national association exclusively dedicated to professionally operated assisted living communities for America's seniors. We are committed to working with Congress to pass health care reform legislation that includes measures to address the varying long-term care needs of older Americans while also supporting independence and choice in meeting different care requirements. It is also critical that health care reform legislation address the current shortages in skilled nurses and primary care physicians in long-term care.

On March 4, 2009, the Senate Select Committee on Aging held their first oversight hearing on the importance of long term care being included in any comprehensive health care reform bill considered by Congress—Health Care Reform in an Aging America. Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) testified that it is crucial that long term-care services are addressed as part of health care reform. By the year 2020 an estimated 15 million Americans will need long term care support and as many as 12.1 million will be over the age of 65. The cost of providing care for older Americans in skilled nursing facilities is now consuming over 50% of Medicaid funding in many states. In response to this cost and growing demand, many states have put in place innovative programs that have allowed for the expansion of long term care services in home and community based care which are up to 50% or roughly half the cost of skilled facilities. ALFA applauds the Committee for holding the hearing which began a much needed dialogue on how we can best improve long-term care services and options while also making them more cost-effective.

In response to the need to provide flexibility and options for long term care choices, a number of bills have been introduced in Congress that aim to increase access to home and community based care under Medicaid. One major initiative that ALFA strongly supports is the Community Living Assistance Services and Support Act introduced during the 110th Congress by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ). This bill provides a national model to help elderly and disabled citizens maintain independence and choice in meeting their long term care needs. In addition, ALFA supports legislation introduced by Senator Kohl (D-WI) and Rep. Schakowsky (D-IL) [S. 245/H.R. 468] to expand education and training opportunities in geriatrics and long term care for licensed health professionals, direct care workers, and family care givers.

These measures will begin to address the present shortage of health care providers much needed to ensure patient care coordination and to allow for a broader range of long term care services to allow older or disabled individuals to live as independently as possible. Assisted living is one option and a philosophy of care that embraces choice, independence and the opportunity for seniors to live enriching lives with dignity, respect and privacy. We are convinced that assisted living is popular because of the bedrock principle of choice and strongly believe that any long term care reform proposal must support this model of care.

ALFA looks forward to working with Congress on these and other measures to address long-term care options and choice for older Americans.

For more information, please contact ALFA's Senior Vice President of Public Policy Maribeth Bersani at (703) 562-1180.

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The **Assisted Living Federation of America** is the largest national association exclusively dedicated to professionally-operated assisted living communities for seniors. ALFA's member-driven programs promote business and operational excellence through national conferences, research, publications and executive networks. ALFA influences public policy at the federal and state level by advocating for informed choice, quality care and accessibility for all Americans seeking assistance with long-term care. The association is laser-focused on providing tools to advance [operational excellence](#) in its member companies.

