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Letters to the Editor
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Looming over The Post's recent article about how to handle falls at senior living communities is a coming reality that will affect almost everything about our society. The population of the United States is aging dramatically; by 2040, the number of Americans ages 65 and older will double, while the number of adults 85 years and older will quadruple.

The resulting impact on emergency services is just one example of how every area of life will have to adjust. Municipal governments may look to add fee-for-service charges to assisted living or other residential care facilities as a way to pay for the staff required to meet increased demand. But making emergency services available to other multifamily households without charge constitutes unreasonable and unlawful discrimination against disabled seniors. If the seniors residing in assisted living had remained in their single-family or multifamily residences, and did not move to assisted living, they would still require emergency services — but would not be penalized with a charge.

Rather than automatically defaulting to fees, it's important to think holistically about the care our expanding senior population will need and deserves, and to act accordingly. A number of states, including California, require assisted living residences to call 911 if a resident has fallen. These regulations are intended to ensure that a medical professional examines a resident who may have fractured a hip or suffered an injury, such as a subdural hematoma, from the fall.

Many assisted living communities have specific and effective fall prevention programs to reduce the likelihood of residents injuring themselves. We all need to work together to make sure that when seniors do fall, they have the help they need to rise again.

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