



## **As Older Americans Face “The Fight of Their Lives,” Care Providers Say HEALS Act Fails to Deliver Relief to Where it is Most Needed**

*America’s Older Adults Must be Put at the Front of the Line, Alongside Hospitals*

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**July 29, 2020 Washington DC** – As Congress negotiates the next coronavirus relief package, leaders from hot-spot states across the country who provide services to older Americans strongly objected to legislation that’s now on the table, saying the version sent out by Senate Majority Leader McConnell this week is woefully insufficient. The comments came at a nationwide press conference today, where an analysis of the legislation was released.

“Older lives are not expendable. This legislation doesn’t yet acknowledge that fundamental truth,” said Katie Smith Sloan, president and CEO of LeadingAge, which represents more than 5,000 nonprofit aging services organizations. “Adults over 65 account for 80% of the US deaths from COVID-19. Congress needs to deliver more than what’s included in the HEALS Act, and put older adults at the front of the line for relief, alongside hospitals.”

LeadingAge released a [HEALS Act Snapshot analysis](#), offering a topline of the bills’ offerings and fundamental shortcomings for aging services providers and older Americans, including:

- **No Dedicated Fund for Aging Services Providers:** The package includes \$25 billion for the provider relief fund, to be split among all eligible providers—which is only a fraction of the \$100 billion dollars needed by aging services providers alone.
- **Insufficient Testing Funds and No National Testing Strategy:** The testing provisions in this legislation are insufficient for keeping up with COVID’s nationwide surge. The total funding allocated isn’t nearly enough to meet demand. Instead of piecemeal funding, a comprehensive and coordinated national testing strategy is needed.
- **No Immediate Solutions for PPE:** The bill also does not sufficiently address the urgent, immediate and growing need for personal protective equipment. Future tax credits for PPE are not enough. The Defense Production Act needs to be invoked immediately, supported by funding from Congress to ensure that more expansive PPE production begins as quickly as possible.

- **Needs of Older Adults in Affordable Housing Not Addressed:** The Senate package does nothing to address the needs of more 750,000 older adults in HUD federally-subsidized and privately-owned housing programs.
- **Minimal Staffing Provisions, No Heroes Pay:** Several provisions of the Act relate to staffing issues, but much needed pandemic or heroes pay for frontline workers is not included.

### **Press Materials**

- [HEALS Act Analysis Snapshot](#)
- [Katie Sloan Smith Remarks](#)
- 7/29 [Telepresser Recording](#)

### **Remarks by State Aging Services Leaders**

Nonprofit aging services leaders from some of the hardest hit states—including Arizona, Florida, Texas, North Carolina and New Jersey—joined the press conference to discuss the challenges in their states and call on Congress to take the steps needed to protect millions of older adults from the worst pandemic in a century. Remarks were offered by:

- **Pam Koester, Chief Executive Officer, [Arizona LeadingAge](#)**  
“Every one of our members is short on staffing. Many staff are working 70-plus hours a week. Our members are spending an average of over \$67,000 per month on PPE due to COVID out of their own pockets without any financial support. They’ve spent over \$600,000 on testing out of their own pockets. This is not sustainable.”
- **Bhakti Gosalia, Vice President of Operations, [Sun Health](#), Arizona, a senior living and philanthropically-supported community wellness organization.**  
“It’s taking a long time to get test kits, and even longer to get results. FEMA is providing some of our members PPE supplies worth about \$100 a month, but our members are spending about \$67,000 a month.”
- **Steve Bahmer, President & CEO, [LeadingAge Florida](#)**  
“If the coronavirus were a hurricane, it would be a Category-5. Our work is providing intimate, compassionate care for our parents, grandparents, family friends, and neighbors. As revenues decline and costs continue to soar, long-term care providers will be in a perilous financial position. Because of the increased costs of staffing, PPE and testing, our members’ operating losses range from \$100,000 to \$3 million a month. That path is unsustainable.” LeadingAge Florida sent a [letter](#) to their Senators last week.
- **George Linial President & CEO, [LeadingAge Texas](#)**  
“Testing of all staff and visitors is a key element in keeping COVID out of our populations—but it’s not been uncommon to wait days or weeks to get test results. Every one of our

members has concerns about their financial future, because the costs are unsustainable. We're concerned some of our providers will be forced to close their doors. Senators Cornyn and Cruz, we are counting on your leadership, and we urge you to put aging services providers at the front of the line alongside hospitals." Linial also shared that he sent a [letter](#) to his Senators today as well.

- **Stephen Fleming, President & Chief Executive Officer, [The Well-Spring Group](#), North Carolina**, *a multi-modal aging services provider serving over one thousand individuals and their families.*

"Without personal protective equipment and testing, we cannot have visitation. What do we say to families that are at our doorsteps, begging to see loved ones? To deny them the basic human right of socialization because we cannot as a society come up with testing is wrong. I urge Congress not to abandon us now."

- **Carol Silver Elliott, President & CEO of [Jewish Home Family](#), New Jersey**, *a skilled nursing home, assisted living and at-home and community services for seniors in New Jersey.*

"We're FedExing tests to an out-of-state lab and wait days for results, at a cost of \$50,000 a week, costs that are not picked up by state or feds. To this day, our most reliable source of PPE is someone whose name we still don't know—who we just call 'parking lot guy.' It is a tragedy and a disgrace that the fight to save the lives of older adults—the fight of our lives—is being waged without support, without resources, without help."

**About LeadingAge:** We represent more than 5,000 aging-focused organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside our members and 38 state partners, we address critical issues by blending applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building. We bring together the most inventive minds in our field to support older adults as they age wherever they call home. We make America a better place to grow old. For more information:

[www.leadingage.org](http://www.leadingage.org)