



**Katie Smith Sloan Remarks for
July 29, 2020 States Telepresser**

We are here to share our disappointment in the coronavirus legislative package released Monday and to break down the vital improvements required to fully address the escalating needs of older Americans.

It's been six months since the first coronavirus case was confirmed in the U.S., and we still have a woefully insufficient national response. What Congress and the Administration do in the coming days will determine the life and death of many of our nation's most vulnerable older adults. Every day we wait and debate, more lives are lost. It is simply not acceptable to continue on as we have been for months.

I am joined by leaders from some of the states hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic, from Arizona, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and North Carolina. My colleagues will share the realities that older adults and their care providers face every day as they scramble for resources, struggle through onerous and confusing guidelines, and fight arm-in-arm to protect their health and save lives.

We know what is needed for older Americans, and the detailed analysis we are releasing today shows this legislation does not go nearly far enough. Among the disappointments...

- There are no funds dedicated to aging services providers. The legislation includes only a fraction of the \$100 billion needed to protect older adults. And aging services providers will have to compete with hospitals and others care providers for those funds.
- The HEALS Act does nothing to address the needs of more 750,000 older adults in HUD federally-subsidized and privately-owned housing programs.
- The testing provisions in this legislation are insufficient. The total funding allocated isn't nearly enough and we need more than piecemeal funding: we need a comprehensive and coordinated national testing strategy.
- The bill also does not sufficiently address the urgent, immediate need for personal protective equipment. Future tax credits for PPE are not enough; The Defense Production Act needs to be invoked now to ensure more expansive PPE production -- with funding from Congress.
- And finally, while several provisions relate to staffing issues, much-needed hero pay for frontline workers is not included.

The bottom line is that Congress needs to deliver more than what's included in the HEALS Act. Adults over 65 account for 16% of the U.S. population and 80% of the US deaths. Our leaders must put older adults at the front of the line alongside hospitals.

Older lives are not expendable. This legislation doesn't yet acknowledge that fundamental truth.

Now I'd like to introduce Pam Koester from Arizona LeadingAge, who will offer the first of our reports from around the country....