



Katie Smith Sloan Remarks for
June 20 Telepresser with LeadingAge Florida

Thank you for joining us. We're here today because there is a category five-level emergency bearing down on millions of older adults in Florida and across the United States. It's been six months since the first coronavirus case was confirmed in the U.S., and the pandemic is still raging. It's growing worse by the week.

As Congress returns to Washington, I am here on behalf of more than 5,000 nursing homes and other aging services providers who know that we are at a turning point. What our lawmakers do in the next weeks will determine the life and death of our nation's most vulnerable older adults. We need a major investment in real solutions now.

For months, we have been sending out a warning to the federal government that this crisis is not over... That we need real solutions now—not a patchwork of policies that allow the pandemic to grow more deadly and dangerous.

Nearly 100,000 people over 65 have died from this virus. As much as 40% of all COVID-19 deaths have been nursing home residents and workers. It didn't have to be this way. But there was no coordinated federal response. There was no prioritization of the most at-risk citizens.

And now we're back to square one, in so many ways. The headlines we read in March are back, about doctors and nurses running on empty, and running out of PPE. After those headlines came a surge in infections and death. We are in the midst of catastrophe with the potential for even greater catastrophe just ahead.

Older Americans living in nursing homes, assisted living, retirement communities around the country are wondering if their elected representatives will do what it takes to keep the virus out of their communities.

It's mind-boggling to read this weekend that the administration is actually trying to block funding for states to step up COVID-19 testing and contact tracing. What kind of message is that to older adults who are so vulnerable to COVID-19 and their families? Every Member of Congress needs to stand up and reject the idea of unilaterally disarming our testing capacity when it is needed more than ever.

Today I am joined by my colleagues who will share a situational report from Florida. They will explain first-hand what their state is facing—in hopes that their representatives in Congress will take heed as they develop the next COVID-19 relief bill in our nation's Capital this week.

This next package of legislation must put older adults and their care providers at the front of the line right alongside hospitals for life-saving resources like PPE and testing, and it must include funding and support that ensure the health and safety of the most at-risk population of older adults.

We are urging Senators Rubio and Scott to play a leading role as Congress prepares for one of its most important decisions in decades: whether to provide the relief needed to protect a generation of older adults from the worst pandemic in a century.

We are counting on their leadership—not only for Floridians but for Americans across the country. We all are counting on them to Act for Older Adults.

And now I'd like to introduce Steve Bahmer from Leadingage Florida to report on what's at stake in Florida.

<THROW TO STEVE>

Thanks Steve.

We're also joined by **Jay Solomon, CEO of Aviva in Sarasota, Florida**. Jay, thank you for being here and sharing your perspective.

<THROW TO JAY>

Thanks Jay.

Now we're happy to take some questions. Emily, I'll turn it over to you.