

September 15, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-222  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, S-230  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

We are deeply concerned that there has been no visible progress on negotiations for the next coronavirus legislation, much less an agreed-upon legislative vehicle. For the people we represent – nonprofit aging services providers including nursing homes, home health, assisted living, hospice, home and community-based services providers, and affordable senior housing – this crisis is not over. As our [Situation Report](#) shows, there remains significant need for legislative and financial support to address the very real immediate needs of, and the long-term impact of the pandemic on, aging services providers, their employees, and the older people they serve.

We of course acknowledge and appreciate the impact of the Families First Act, the CARES Act and subsequent additions to CARES – our members could not have survived without allocations from the Provider Relief Fund and the Paycheck Protection Program, although not all our provider entities were eligible for both programs or received allocations quickly (e.g., PACE organizations). However, what we knew in March and April about the disease and its impact has significantly changed – this is not a short-term crisis but something that will affect the public health system, the economy, and providers of housing and services to older persons, as well as older persons themselves, for the considerable future.

On [May 5](#), [June 15](#), and [August 11](#), LeadingAge submitted recommendations for additional legislative measures, including additional funding and a proposal for a national testing strategy. We add, now, that we will also need a national vaccine strategy. Because the situation is so dire for nonprofit aging services across the country, LeadingAge has also released the attached Pandemic Situation Report on aging services providers' immediate needs for access and funding for rapid-response testing, and on their mounting struggle to pay the spiraling cost of expensive testing supplies, PPE, and staffing. Given the lack of public information regarding ongoing negotiations, we are concerned that addressing this crisis will slip away. We rely on our elected officials to respond to critical national issues that require national solutions. The coronavirus crisis has not ended for aging services providers and older persons.

Key Requests:

1. Require the Administration to adopt meaningful and consistent national strategies for the acquisition, distribution, and financing of testing, and for the equitable distribution of safe, effective vaccines.
2. Continue to provide additional funding for the Provider Relief Fund to ensure that all aging services providers – including nursing homes, assisted living, hospice, home health, adult day services centers, PACE organizations, and continuing care retirement communities – have access to funds to pay for personal protective equipment needed so long as the public health emergency continues, lost income from reduced occupancy, and other needs
3. Ensure that there is adequate funding for regular and consistent testing available for all providers of aging services, including funding to replace staff who must quarantine or who become ill.
4. Expand and modify the Paycheck Protection Program by making loans available to aging services providers of all sizes to participate, allowing second-draw loans for existing borrowers who experienced significant revenue losses and/or increased outlays specific to fighting COVID-19 (e.g., PPE, staffing and testing costs borne by aging services providers) and simplifying loan forgiveness processes for PPP borrowers.
5. Provide specific funds for affordable senior housing to address the additional costs associated with COVID-19, including PPE for staff, engaging service coordinators for all HUD senior housing, and installing building-wide Wi-Fi so residents can access telehealth and family.
6. Provide additional pandemic “premium pay” for essential workers, which includes direct care workers who play a critical role in aging services, recognizing that they are putting their lives on the line each day to protect older persons and others who are susceptible to COVID-19.
7. Make telehealth flexibilities, currently permitted via the Coronavirus Preparedness and Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020, the CARES Act, and 1135 waivers, permanent and allow home health telehealth services to be reimbursed.
8. Increase the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) for Medicaid by a total of 14 points and for Medicaid home and community-based services (including waiver/state plan services and PACE) by an additional 10 points.
9. Allow hospices more flexibility in the provision of respite care during the emergency.

Thank you for your leadership, which is greatly needed now more than ever to ensure that the most vulnerable people are not abandoned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Smith Sloan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie Smith Sloan  
President and CEO LeadingAge  
Acting President and CEO, VNAA/Elevating Home