



August 11, 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:

LeadingAge and our partners, the Visiting Nurse Associations of America (VNAA) and ElevatingHOME are deeply troubled that Congress failed to reach an agreement on the next coronavirus relief package. Our members, nearly 6000 mission-driven aging services organizations who provide affordable senior housing, health care and personal assistance to older persons and persons with disabilities, have been dealing with coronavirus firsthand for six months and know this pandemic is not over. Aging services have continued to experience critical, unreimbursed expenses and legal/administrative barriers that must be addressed in order to protect older people and frontline staff who serve them.

Furthermore, the Executive Orders issued by President Trump responding to expired coronavirus provisions do not address these essential needs. Aging services providers (with only a few exceptions, such as some adult day centers) continue to serve older adults and their families each day, as they have since the start of the pandemic. They are doing their best to cover gaps in PPE/supplies, testing, and staffing.

We were sorely disappointed that Congress did not reach agreement on the next relief package. Aging services providers continue to face extensive additional spending for PPE/cleaning supplies, testing, and additional staff when they are available at all – many report spending tens of thousands of dollars per month for these precious, essential resources. Shortages and price gouging are regular occurrences.

For older adults and those who serve them, this pandemic is not over. LeadingAge members are stepping up to act for older adults every day. We implore Congress to step up and act as well. The lives of older adults are in the balance. Please don't let them down. Please don't fail their family members. Please don't ignore the selfless hard work of the staff who serve them.

We seek your leadership on our Five Essential Actions and we ask you to treat aging services providers as a separate and independent entity, as they collectively encompass both publicly-financed affordable senior housing and privately financed housing, long-term care settings (like nursing homes, assisted living, memory care), continuing care retirement communities, adult day centers, home and community

based services (HCBS), hospice, home health, all in service to the most vulnerable populations -- older people, those with chronic health conditions, and people of color.

Five Essential Actions

LeadingAge is advocating for urgently needed protections for older adults and staff in publicly and privately financed aging services across the continuum of care. The only way to stop this unraveling catastrophe is to provide significant additional targeted relief, which includes:

1. IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO AMPLE AND APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) FOR ALL PROVIDERS WHO SERVE OLDER ADULTS.
2. ON DEMAND AND FULLY FUNDED ACCESS TO ACCURATE AND RAPID-RESULTS TESTING FOR OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR CARE PROVIDERS.
3. ASSURANCE THAT STATES WILL CONSIDER THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OLDER ADULTS AS THEY REOPEN.
4. FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR AGING SERVICES PROVIDERS ACROSS THE CONTINUUM OF CARE.
5. PANDEMIC HERO PAY, PAID SICK LEAVE, AND HEALTH CARE COVERAGE FOR THE HEROIC FRONTLINE WORKERS WHO ARE RISKING THEIR OWN LIVES SERVING OLDER PEOPLE DURING THIS CRISIS.

We outlined our specific requests to you on [May 5](#) and [June 15](#). Today, we are asking for:

- \$100 billion targeted to aging services providers across the continuum of care in the Provider Relief Fund.
- \$1.2 billion for COVID relief for providers of affordable housing paired with meaningful eviction protections.
- \$10 billion for a dedicated testing program for aging services providers. We note that HHS is providing antigen testing machines for all nursing homes in the country but recognize that this is only one segment of the continuum and even nursing homes face high costs for testing supplies and backup PCR testing.
- Targeted reimbursement to cover increased pay and benefits for aging services workers.
- Strengthen the Medicaid program with increased FMAP, ensuring providers receive adequate Medicaid rates, and targeting home and community-based services.
- Support for adult day programs, many of which have shuttered during the pandemic and need funding to remain operational.
- Provide broadband services to enable health care delivery to everyone.
- A Bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Future of Aging Services.
- Medicare reimbursement for home health visits conducted by telehealth.
- Extension of the current telehealth authorities under the Public Health Emergency and an independent evaluation of their costs and impact.

- Changes to the Paycheck Protection Program, such as expanded eligibility, a pathway for a second loan for some borrowers, and a simplified forgiveness process.
- Expanded opportunities for respite care for hospice beneficiaries.

As you meet with constituents in your home states, districts, and communities, we encourage you to visit and engage with aging services providers to best understand what they are dealing with every day and how they make ends meet. Please find a path to a compromise that supports their essential work on behalf of millions of American families.

For further information, please contact Ruth Katz, Senior Vice President, Policy, rkatz@leadingage.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Smith Sloan".

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