



August 14, 2020

Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

I am the president and CEO of LeadingAge and Acting President and CEO of the Visiting Nurses Association of America (VNAA) and ElevatingHome, which together represent more than 5,000 nonprofit organizations that provide care and support for millions of older Americans every day, including skilled nursing, assisted living, memory care, adult day, home health, hospice, affordable housing, and the entire field of aging services.

We appreciate your administration's efforts to address the needs of nursing homes during this pandemic. However, as this coronavirus continues to rage, much, much more will be required to serve older adults who live in nursing homes as well as those across the entire continuum of aging services. Aging services providers continue to face extensive additional spending for PPE and cleaning supplies, testing, and additional staff when they are available at all. Shortages and price gouging are regular occurrences. Coordinated strategies at the federal level are absolutely necessary and we implore you to take leadership on this and to negotiate with Congress in a spirit of solution-finding.

We have heard members across the country describe their financial challenges related to the loss of revenue and additional expenses resulting from COVID-19. For example, an affordable housing provider reported that move-ins were down, rent payments were delayed, and it cost them \$5,200 for additional cleaning per confirmed COVID-19 case in the building. At the same time there were entirely new costs for PPE, thermometers, and providing transportation, food, laundry and other services as community services closed down and residents needed to stay within the building. A rural nursing home in the Midwest that serves low income people on the thinnest of margins estimated that it will cost \$750,000 for the year to perform weekly staff tests. For this small nursing home revenues are reduced as elective surgeries such as hip replacements are postponed and costs for PPE, cleaning and staffing are increased exponentially. A Life Plan Community in the Southeast projects additional COVID-19 related costs of a half million dollars this year. One home health provider has gone from using 6 PPE gowns per month under normal circumstances to using 1,200 gowns per month now!

The recently-issued Executive Orders seem to be creating as many problems as they attempt to solve. Payroll tax deferral (and perhaps longer-term forgiveness) create additional challenges for our members as employers while they are in the midst of this pandemic. Further, the Orders either put families at risk as they try to figure out how to pay the deferred taxes when they eventually come due, or put Social Security and Medicare at risk for significantly reduced funding if they are forgiven. This creates jeopardy for older adults and aging services providers. The Order's provisions on evictions ask various agencies to

consider what might be done, but there are no specifics nor timelines. This is extremely problematic for older adults who live in federally-assisted housing and our members who serve them.

We would again ask you to do what is within your power and to work earnestly with Congress to address the Five Essential Actions LeadingAge members need urgently to protect 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 to service older people during this crisis.

For older adults and those who serve them, this pandemic is far from over. LeadingAge members are stepping up to act for older adults every day. We implore you to step up and act as well. Please take leadership within your authority and please work with Congress for additional relief. The lives of older adults are hanging 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. COVID-19 death tolls of 1,000 people a day across the country cannot become the new normal.

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