



As Reopenings Boost Threat of COVID-19, Nonprofit Aging Services Leaders Say Policymakers Must Deliver PPE, Testing & Other Resources to Protect A Generation

PRESS RELEASE | May 07, 2020 | by Lisa Sanders

LeadingAge Lays Out Five Essential Actions To Avert Death Sentence for Older Adults

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May 6, 2020, Washington DC As states across the country reopen their economies without meaningful plans for safeguarding older adults, a leading aging services association unveiled a five-point action plan to protect our older generation. “We are alarmed to see that states are reopening without protecting older adults—even as the virus rages on. We cannot continue down this path or we will threaten an entire generation.” said Katie Smith Sloan, president and CEO of LeadingAge, which represents more than 5,000 nonprofit aging services organizations.

Eight in 10 deaths resulting from COVID-19 in the US were people who were 65 years and older.

Aging services providers across the continuum—nursing homes, assisted living, home health, hospice, PACE, adult day services and affordable housing providers—are struggling to care for millions of older adults but lack fundamental personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing necessary to contain the virus and keep vulnerable Americans and their caregivers safe.

“This is the fight of our lives. We are fighting to keep elders and staff safe, fighting to help ill elders heal, fighting to get the supplies we need, and fighting against a

misleading and inaccurate portrayal of nursing homes and senior services. We are on the front line. We are in the trenches and we need the support that we so desperately deserve,” said Carol Silver Elliott, president & CEO of Jewish Home Family. LeadingAge’s “[Older American Lives At Stake: Five Essential Actions](#)” calls for five urgent measures that must be taken to avoid threatening an entire generation of Americans. It includes prioritizing older adults as states reopen, delivering ample PPE and rapid-results testing for older adults and their care workers, and recognition and support for those heroic frontline workers.

The plan’s fifth item calls on Congress to allocate \$100 billion in its next relief package to cover COVID-19 aging services needs, along with other critical support such as supplemental pay for frontline workers, federal housing assistance, telehealth funding, access to loans, Medicaid adjustments and administrative relief. LeadingAge [released a letter](#) with those requests sent to Congressional leaders on Tuesday, May 5. Over 50% of LeadingAge members responding to a recent online poll indicated that they expect their current supply of PPE to last two weeks or less. Of the organizations with a current COVID-19 diagnosis, over 90% report being concerned about PPE. Citing concerns about states reopening without first protecting older Americans, Danny Stricker, President of Ascension Living, said, “We urge that as states lift their stay-at-home orders, they implement plans, testing and funding, which specifically address the need to ensure that those 65 and older in all residential and care settings - the most vulnerable - continue to stay safe and well.”

“Our seniors have protected this country by serving in our military and building our communities through hard work and public service. Today it is our turn to take care of them. We have a responsibility as a society to provide them with the necessary protections and support during this pandemic. Leaders in Massachusetts and Boston have been responsive to Rogerson’s calls for assistance and we need more from all levels to ensure that there is testing and PPE for all of our seniors across the country to keep them healthy and safe,” said Walter Ramos, President and CEO of Rogerson Communities.

In its new plan, Older Americans Lives at Stake: Five Essential Actions, LeadingAge laid out the fundamental steps that policymakers must take to protect older adults and the people who care for them:

OLDER AMERICAN LIVES AT STAKE: FIVE ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

- 1. Assurance that states will not reopen without first ensuring older Americans are safe and protected.**
- 2. Immediate access to ample PPE** for *all* care providers who serve older Americans, not just nursing homes. Policymakers must act now to get these providers on the same priority tier as hospitals.
- 3. On-demand access to rapid-results testing for older adults and their care providers.** Aging services providers must also be on the same priority tier as hospitals. Results are needed in minutes, not days or weeks.

4. **Recognition for the heroic frontline workers serving older Americans** in nursing homes, assisted living, affordable housing, and home and community based settings, including hospice – just as we've recognized hospital workers and others who have kept America running.
5. **Funding and support for aging services providers across the continuum of care.** In its next relief package, Congress must allocate **\$100 billion** to cover COVID-19 needs, and provide critical support for aging services: **hazard pay for frontline workers, federal housing assistance, support to deliver telehealth, access to loans, Medicaid increases, and administrative relief.**

About LeadingAge:

We represent more than 5,000 aging-focused organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside our members and 38 state partners, we address critical issues by blending applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building. We bring together the most inventive minds in our field to support older adults as they age wherever they call home. We make America a better place to grow old. For more information: www.leadingage.org