



September 20, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chair
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Pallone:

On behalf of LeadingAge, thank you for your steadfast leadership in support of investments for older adults and people with disabilities in the House Committee on Energy and Commerce reconciliation bill.

LeadingAge represents more than 5,000 nonprofit aging services providers, including affordable senior housing providers, nursing homes, home health, hospice, and other mission-minded organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside our members and 38 state partners, we use applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building to make America a better place to grow old. Our membership encompasses the continuum of services for people as they age.

There is a dire need to expand the aging services system for the 21st Century, and ensuring the estimated 74 million Americans, by 2030, who will be 65 or older can receive care and services. It is time to ensure that our nation and communities are good places to grow old, and there are enhanced Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) available to support the care eligible people need.

Tragically, the COVID-19 pandemic shed new, much needed light on the challenges of aging services providers. The health crisis also raised awareness of how much consumers and aging services organizations depend on workers to provide care, and exposed deficiencies in the long term service and supports system. If we do not take steps to address the challenge of repairing and bolstering the infrastructure of aging, generations will be paying for our omission for years to come.

Several pieces of the Committee's reconciliation bill are of particular importance to older adults:

- Allocating at least \$190 billion to expand HCBS services for older adults and people with disabilities, as specified in the *Better Care Better Jobs Act*. This allocation would also strengthen the direct care workforce recruitment and retention opportunities by improving provider payment rates and giving states the resources to ensure the rate increases are passed through to workers' wages;
- Making permanent the Money Follows the Person and the spousal impoverishment programs;
- Closing the Medicaid coverage gap, to allow 4 million uninsured Americans to gain access to coverage.
- Investing \$35 billion to help rebuild public health departments, modernize health care facilities, and expand capacity for training primary health care providers;

- Expanding Medicare to allow additional dental, hearing and vision benefits for seniors; and
- Finally, we recommend that the bill be amended to include the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) provisions from “Section 206, Enhanced Funding to Support Staffing and Quality Care in Nursing Facilities,” included in [The Nursing Home Improvement and Accountability Act of 2021](#). The enhanced funding would provide states with a temporary enhanced federal Medicaid match to allow nursing homes to improve wages and benefits for six years, to expand and improve nursing facility staffing. The funds must also be used to support and improve resident care, including by expanding person-centered models of care. States may receive a three-percentage point increase to their federal match for four years, two-point increase for one year, and a one-point increase in the final year.

Older adults and aging services providers are desperate for these investments and are deeply grateful for your leadership to secure them. LeadingAge stands ready to support the funding levels and adjustments in your Committee’s bill through enactment, which cannot come soon enough.

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

cc: The Honorable John Yarmuth, Chair, House Committee on the Budget