

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515



Dear Speaker Johnson,

Congratulations on assuming your new role as Speaker of the House of Representatives. I am honored to write to you on behalf of the more than 5,000 mission-driven aging services providers that touch millions of lives through care and housing every day. Many of our nonprofit members are faith-based organizations that were established more than 100 years ago. [LeadingAge](#) is the trusted voice for aging—we bring together the most innovative minds to lead and craft solutions that support older adults wherever they call home. 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 members look forward to opportunities to partner with and support you on issues related to older individuals. To begin this partnership, I respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss the aging and long-term care ecosystem, as well as a few specific recommendations:

- Form an aging stakeholders' group to act as advisors to you, your staff, and other congressional leaders on aging services, long-term care in all settings, affordable senior housing, and the aging services and healthcare workforce.
- Mandate the enactment of a [White House Office on Aging Policy](#), empowered to take an all-of-government approach to the challenges and opportunities facing our aging population.
- Work with the Administration to engage the Departments of Labor, State, and other relevant agencies to work collaboratively to streamline the immigration process for applicants seeking to enter the U.S. legally and use their skills in aging services.

Our country is undergoing a dramatic demographic shift. In 2019, the U.S. population age 65 and older numbered 54.1 million and represented 16% of the population—more than one in every seven Americans. The number of older Americans has increased by 14.4 million (since 2009, compared to an increase of 3% for the under 65 population).¹ In your home state of Louisiana, nearly 20% of the population are adults over 65.

The U.S. health care system is navigating a new and unfamiliar landscape in the wake of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Three years of sustained stress and increasing workloads have caused a dramatic shift in staffing patterns and an alarming rise in burnout across health professions. While shortages were projected before the pandemic, they have reached a crisis point in its wake. We need more training, education, supply, and incentives specifically for nurses and direct care workers to enter aging services.

The changing demographics and need to support older adults where they live and receive services present a unique opportunity for you to demonstrate American leadership and commitment to protecting human dignity. The needs of older adults and their caregivers will set

¹ Administration for Community Living. (2021, May). *2020 Profile of Older Americans*.

the course of our country for generations to come. Ensuring that older adults are not aging into poverty, that hard-working caregivers are compensated fairly, and ensuring that older adults receive dignified care are American values. Our country needs decisive and bold action from principled, mission-driven leaders, like you, to shape policies that are worthy of the elders who have built our country.

On behalf of our 5,000 members and the families they serve, we look forward to being an asset to your efforts to support our ageing population.

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