



December 22, 2023

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Dear Secretary Becerra,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss COVID vaccination among residents of nursing homes yesterday. LeadingAge and our nonprofit, mission-driven members are deeply concerned about the low rates so far this year.

I'm glad to be able to share that LeadingAge member nursing homes have vaccination rates significantly above the national average: As of December 10, the **NHSN data show that 45.94% of residents in LeadingAge member nursing homes are up to date, more than ten percent higher than the national average of 33.13%** (and even higher than non-LeadingAge member providers, 31.54%).

Still, our members are working hard to educate residents and their family members and to increase the number of residents protected. The health and well-being of the residents who live in our member communities is of utmost importance, and we agree that there is opportunity to increase the number of residents who are vaccinated with the most recent COVID booster.

We will continue to encourage members to talk about the importance of the COVID vaccine and work to increase these results—and ask you to seize this important opportunity to amplify a public health message about the life saving benefit of the COVID booster. ***This is a message that must come from not only the nursing home community but from federal leaders, and we urge you to take action.*** Americans look to you as the highest public health official in the land; it would speak volumes if, in addition to other actions, you appealed directly to residents and their family members. Educating them on the point you made so well – your chances of dying from COVID are five times higher than your chance of dying from the flu – would go a long way.

We will continue to monitor these results, learn from our members about successful strategies that we can share more broadly, and stay in touch with your office on progress. Working together, we can make a difference.

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 & CEO  
LeadingAge

Cc: Jonathan Blum  
Stephen Cha  
Elizabeth Weiland