



May 21, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Vice President:

I am the President and CEO of LeadingAge, which represents more than 5,000 mission-driven, nonprofit organizations that provide care and support for millions of older Americans every day, including skilled nursing, long-term care, home health care, hospice, and the entire field of aging services.

The coronavirus pandemic is a slow-motion catastrophe that continues to threaten millions of older adults. More than four months after the crisis began, aging services still are battling a massive, nationwide deficit of supplies, tests, and the funds to pay for them. This tragic reality has left too many care providers handcuffed—particularly nursing homes—as they desperately try to protect older adults and the care workers who bravely show up each day to serve them. Nursing homes around the country are waiting for the federal government to provide consistent, real relief, not sympathy or promises.

That's why it's been so troubling to see your recent photo-ops at nursing homes. Symbolic pictures taken of you with a few boxes of supplies are misleading when the picture at too many nursing homes is starkly different. If only these visits were demonstrative of a clear and comprehensive national effort to deliver ample PPE to the nursing homes who need them.

But these few boxes of PPE do not reflect reality. (Indeed, at your May 20 photo-op in Orlando, FL, a health administrator at the care center you visited actually underscored the true picture, saying "It's very difficult to get these supplies.") While it may not be your intention, these photo-ops send a false impression that nursing homes and other aging services providers are getting what they need. That is nowhere close to the truth.

We understand that the boxes you delivered were part of recent FEMA shipments to nursing homes. But that effort is only slated to supply two weeks' worth of PPE to nursing homes by the end of June. Two weeks is way too little, and the end of June is way too late.

What nursing homes need right now to protect millions of vulnerable older adults are real resources, not stagecraft and photo-ops. We need federal government action that delivers adequate PPE, that funds ongoing and rapid testing, and that offers real support for the front line care workers who are risking their lives to protect millions of our most vulnerable Americans.

If you would like to learn more about the needs of our nonprofit members who have been trying to find and pay for the PPE they need to care for their residents, we would welcome a conversation at your earliest convenience.

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