



July 20, 2020

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

Dear Vice President Pence:

LeadingAge, on behalf of our nearly 6,000 mission-focused aging services members who provide affordable senior housing, health care and personal assistance to older persons and persons with disabilities, urges you to use the powers of the Defense Production Act to increase the availability of critically needed personal protective equipment (PPE) and diagnostic testing. The CARES Act has allocated funding, and now the Administration must exercise timely leadership to coordinate the increased production of these medical supplies and equipment.

As the months pass and COVID-19 cases increase in 40 states, organizations that provide health care and services to vulnerable older adults still struggle with access to sufficient, affordable PPE and reliable, rapid-results testing. Personal protective equipment continues to be difficult to procure, quality is quite variable, and prices have increased dramatically. Exercising the powers of the Defense Production Act, the Administration can ensure the reliable availability of the high-quality, affordable PPE so essential to the health and safety of older adults and those who provide supports and services to them.

While we appreciate the recent announcement that nursing homes will receive antigen testing machines and a limited supply of test kits, this is not sufficient. Negative test results using the antigen method will need to be further tested using the PCR method. Additionally, many states do not accept test results from nursing homes using antigen testing.

Due to constraints in many parts of the supply chain, the turnaround time for results from these expensive PCR tests exceeds one week in many areas of the country. This will not stem the spread of the virus since testing is a key component in identifying and treating people with the virus while keeping those around them safe.

In sum, we ask that you provide leadership, using the Defense Production Act, to ensure that the federal government fulfills its responsibility to protect older Americans and their care workers. A coordinated federal approach can streamline, standardize, and solve the supply chain problems created by the current fragmented marketplace and will help to relieve healthcare and service providers of the huge burdens of securing PPE and reliable testing, allowing them to focus on the important work of keeping older Americans safe and well.

I am available to discuss this with you further or you may reach out to Ruth Katz, LeadingAge's Senior Vice President for Policy.

Sincerely,

Katie Smith Sloan
President and CEO
LeadingAge