



Leadership Council
of *Aging Organizations*

Katie Smith Sloan, Chair

May 19, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell and Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

The undersigned members of the [Leadership Council of Aging Organizations](#) (LCAO) are writing to urge Congress to swiftly and fully fund the White House's request for supplemental appropriations to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We thank Congress for taking action on previous COVID-19 relief funding, including on some provisions for which LCAO previously advocated. Yet, even though the nation is fatigued, the virus continues to attack our communities. Cases are surging around the country, hospitalizations are on the increase and the relentless nature of the pandemic continues draining state and local resources and straining the health care system. Time is of the essence to provide additional critical investments, not only to continue to support the millions of older Americans and other communities at risk, but also to better prepare our health system for future crisis associated with this virus or other compounding disasters that our nation may face.

LCAO is a coalition of national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population and committed to representing their interests in policy-making arenas. LCAO serves as a source of reliable information about issues affecting older adults and provides leadership and vision as America meets the challenges and opportunities presented by our aging society. Our organizations have expertise in economic security, nutrition and food security, housing, health care, long-term services and supports, and other issues facing older adults and people with disabilities, and we work to reduce barriers and celebrate the contributions of these diverse populations.

As you know, older adults and people with disabilities, and those who support and care for them, have been and continue to be at increased risk from COVID-19. One million people have died from the pandemic; of this number, the vast majority are older adults and nearly a quarter are residents and staff of long-term care facilities. [As breakthrough infections increase, older adults continue to face the greatest risk of death](#). During the Omicron wave this winter, nearly 2 out of 3 people who died were age 75 or older. Millions more Americans have been infected and, as of the end of 2021, [1.2 million more adults are now living with disabilities](#) due to COVID-19. Due to underlying inequities in our health and social support systems, older adults and people with disabilities from low-income households and communities of color have experienced the greatest harms, including severe illness and death.

COVID-19 diagnoses and hospitalizations are once again on the rise in the U.S. Congress must take action *now* to ensure we have measures in place to *prevent* as many illnesses and save as many lives as possible. People who are uninsured or underinsured already have more difficulty accessing testing, vaccines and other services due to Congress’s failure to provide supplemental funding to keep Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) COVID programs running. And as the Biden Administration [has warned](#), without additional funding we will not have enough vaccine doses to provide additional boosters to every American—let alone be able to ensure ready access to new vaccines that are more responsive to variants. Nor will we have the resources to continue supporting global vaccine access, which is vital to stopping the emergence of new variants and keeping Americans healthy and safe. Additional funding is also crucial to maintain access to existing treatments and testing, as well as to secure access to new treatments. Both boosters and treatments are especially critical to protect older adults and others at high risk for breakthrough infections from experiencing serious illness and death.

We are calling on Congress to fully fund the [White House’s request for emergency COVID response funding](#) immediately. This funding is absolutely necessary to maintain access to vaccines, treatment, testing, and other basic measures to protect the health and lives of older adults and others at greatest risk.

Sincerely,

American Federal of Teachers
Aging Life Care Association
Alliance for Retired Americans
AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
American Association of Service Coordinators
American Geriatrics Society
American Society on Aging
APWU Retirees Department
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in HBCUs
Community Catalyst
Center for Medicare Advocacy

Families USA
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge
Lutheran Services in America
Meals on Wheels America
Medicare Rights Center
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association for Hispanic Elderly
National Association of Social Workers
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council on Aging
National Senior Corps Association
National Council on Aging
The Gerontological Society of America
USAging
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement