



October 5, 2018

Dear Lisa and LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire members:

Thank you for your smart, thoughtful participation in the LeadingAge – ME&NH Town Hall Conversation on Monday, October 1. We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful setting (kudos to Piper Shores) or a more inspiring start to the month of October.

Lisa has posted a link to a summary of the Town Hall on the website: <https://www.leadingagemenh.org/past-events> The members of LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire no doubt already know this, but for the record, Lisa's leadership talent goes a long way to making your organization, and all of you, shine!

I've had the good fortune to attend more than ten town halls since we began this process, and to hear about another 15 or so. Participants in the ME&NH event were uniquely engaged – it seemed like every single person there had something helpful to add to the discussion and generously shared it. The other stand out feature was the positive, future-oriented thinking that seems to be a hallmark of this group of members. Your willingness to throw out ideas – even very out of the box ideas -- and run them up the flagpole demonstrates the kind of courage that enables our advocacy work at LeadingAge to be equally bold.

But it wasn't all about big ideas for the distant future. Reports from the "front lines" are enormously valuable in advocacy and policy work. Your very specific suggestions about federal Medicaid, Medicare, tax reform, and HUD policies were on point and you will see them reflected in the 2019 LeadingAge Policy Priorities as well as in the day to day work of the Advocacy office. On these issues, direct quotes from providers -- who know how policies play out on the ground, in reality – are priceless and we will use them. (Don't worry, no attribution to any individual or provider organization!)

A lot of challenges and ideas that I have not heard in other Town Halls came up in yours. For example, some of the suggestions that came out of the workforce discussions related to contract staff, or the idea of cross training EMTs and others to become CNAs were new to me. I was also impressed with the depth of thinking among participants. We have heard across the country that immigration issues are important for an industry experiencing dire worker shortages. We haven't heard much about the implications of employing an immigrant workforce, such as the need for English as a Second Language training.

In the end, it's your stories about the important work you do – both the barriers/difficulties and the rewards – that provide the best illustrations for policy makers in Congress and the Administration. I am humbled by your generosity in sharing them.

We are compiling a list of Town Hall participants and will share additional information as we develop the 2019 priorities. I hope you will continue to engage with us on advocacy. Feel free to reach out with additional thoughts, challenges, and ideas. I'm at rkatz@leadingage.org

Ruth Katz
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