

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

The undersigned organizations represent the hundreds of thousands of physicians who treat our nation's patients every day. We are writing to request immediate financial assistance for physicians across the country who are taking heroic action to treat patients with the novel coronavirus, providing ongoing care for patients with chronic conditions and urgent needs, and incurring significant financial losses due to postponing non-essential procedures and visits.

Congress intended to provide relief to physician practices who are suffering financial loss due to COVID-19 by designating funding in the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The statute requires HHS to interpret eligibility for the funding broadly to include all physicians who are experiencing revenue losses and non-reimbursable expenses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Physician practices, depending on their location and specialty, face several hardships that we believe should qualify for help. For example, we have heard physicians who are caring for patients with COVID-19 are staying in hotels or renting an apartment to protect their loved ones and maintain a proper social distance. Many physicians who practice in offices and ambulatory surgical centers are not seeing patients for non-essential visits and procedures to preserve medical supplies for treating patients with COVID-19 and to slow the community spread of the virus. We are also concerned that small practices are particularly vulnerable to financial ruin as they have less ready access to capital and are already operating on razor thin margins. In addition, we have heard from many large physician practices and faculty practice plans that have over 500 employees and will not qualify for the small business assistance in the CARES Act. They are faced with the untenable position of laying off staff and physicians due to lower financial revenues while preparing for, and in some areas of the country, responding to a surge in patients with COVID-19.

We recommend HHS provide immediate relief to ensure a sufficient physician workforce is available in this country now and throughout the pandemic. **Specifically, we urge HHS to provide one month of revenue to each physician (MD or DO), nurse practitioner, and physician assistant enrolled in Medicare or Medicaid to account for financial losses and non-reimbursable expenses.** HHS should use an individual's average monthly payment amount from October-December 2019, which has been provided to the Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs), as the basis for determining pre-pandemic monthly revenue. For most specialties, Medicare patients account for 35% of all patients, so to extrapolate to all patients, HHS should use three times the October-December 2019 average as the basis for issuing a payment. Certain specialties have fewer Medicare patients and should be adjusted upward accordingly: psychiatry (20%), allergy/immunology (15%), obstetrics/gynecology (15%), and pediatrics (5%). Pediatricians, obstetrician-gynecologists, and allergists may have many patients insured by Medicaid but few or no patients with Medicare and will require a different approach. The funds are for the purpose of

supporting physician practices in light of lost revenue, such as for paying salaries, benefits, and overhead and making necessary investments to continue providing care such as telehealth.

The CARES Act permits the Secretary to provide funding through a grant or other mechanism and we urge the Department to provide immediate financial relief by issuing funds via the MACs. We believe it will be expedient to administer, while also allowing proper oversight as funding would be based on Medicare claims data and utilize existing enrollment and payment protocols.

Physicians are continuing to put their patients' needs first to combat this unprecedented public health emergency. We urge you to support them against financial peril while they put their lives and businesses at risk.

Sincerely,

American Medical Association  
Academy of Physicians in Clinical Research  
AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine  
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology  
American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Emergency Medicine  
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy  
American Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery  
American Academy of Pain Medicine  
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
American Academy of Sleep Medicine  
American Association for Hand Surgery  
American Association for Physician Leadership  
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.  
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists  
American Association of Clinical Urologists  
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodagnostic Medicine  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American Association of Public Health Physicians  
American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology  
American College of Cardiology  
American College of Chest Physicians  
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Internists

American College of Osteopathic Surgeons  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Radiation Oncology  
American College of Radiology  
American College of Rheumatology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine  
American Medical Group Association  
American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy  
American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery  
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery  
American Society for Radiation Oncology  
American Society for Surgery of the Hand  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
American Society of Breast Surgeons  
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery  
American Society of Dermatopathology  
American Society of Echocardiography  
American Society of General Surgeons  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians  
American Society of Neuroimaging  
American Society of Neuroradiology  
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Society of Retina Specialists  
American Urogynecologic Society  
American Urological Association  
American Vein & Lymphatic Society  
Association for Clinical Oncology  
Association of Academic Physiatrists  
College of American Pathologists  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
Endocrine Society  
Heart Rhythm Society  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
International College of Surgeons – United States Section  
International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgery  
Medical Group Management Association  
National Association of Medical Examiners  
National Medical Association  
North American Neuromodulation Society  
North American Spine Society

Renal Physicians Association  
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions  
Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons  
Society of Gynecologic Oncology  
Society of Hospital Medicine  
Society of Interventional Radiology  
Spine Intervention Society  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Medical Association of the State of Alabama  
Alaska State Medical Association  
Arizona Medical Association  
Arkansas Medical Society  
California Medical Association  
Colorado Medical Society  
Connecticut State Medical Society  
Medical Society of Delaware  
Medical Society of the District of Columbia  
Florida Medical Association Inc  
Medical Association of Georgia  
Hawaii Medical Association  
Idaho Medical Association  
Illinois State Medical Society  
Indiana State Medical Association  
Iowa Medical Society  
Kansas Medical Society  
Kentucky Medical Association  
Louisiana State Medical Society  
Maine Medical Association  
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society  
Massachusetts Medical Society  
Michigan State Medical Society  
Minnesota Medical Association  
Mississippi State Medical Association  
Missouri State Medical Association  
Montana Medical Association  
Nebraska Medical Association  
Nevada State Medical Association  
New Hampshire Medical Society  
Medical Society of New Jersey  
New Mexico Medical Society  
Medical Society of the State of New York  
North Carolina Medical Society  
North Dakota Medical Association  
Ohio State Medical Association  
Oklahoma State Medical Association

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Oregon Medical Association  
Pennsylvania Medical Society  
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Tennessee Medical Association  
Texas Medical Association  
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Vermont Medical Society  
Medical Society of Virginia  
Washington State Medical Association  
West Virginia State Medical Association  
Wisconsin Medical Society  
Wyoming Medical Society