

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar:

Given the authority granted to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, we request that you ensure physicians have access to the funds made available in the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund.

We are grateful for the sweeping actions that the Administration has taken to give our healthcare system and providers flexibility to address the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). These lifesaving actions have given health systems, hospitals, and providers needed tools to address the COVID-19 patient surge and conserve valuable personal protective equipment (PPE). We also recognize that this would not be possible without the action of physicians across the country who have halted their regular business in order to conserve PPE and protect patients from exposure to COVID-19.

Following CMS recommendations to limit all non-essential planned surgeries and procedures, many physician and outpatient surgical practices across the country suspended their operations to preserve PPE and safeguard patients from the risk of exposure to COVID-19. By suspending services that comprise a majority of a physician offices' income, many of these practices are now facing financial distress that may lead to office closures nationwide. With a drastic decrease in patient volume, these practices are struggling to keep their employees on payroll. Many practitioners are going without any pay, and some, like emergency physicians, cannot stand down.

For many, physician offices are the first access point to our healthcare system. If they do not receive assistance on this issue that has only emerged due to their protective action to stop seeing patients, then we will further exacerbate this crisis by driving more patients to the emergency room.

Through the CARES Act, Congress provided HHS with the authority and flexibility to reimburse "eligible health care providers for health care related expenses or lost revenues that are attributable to coronavirus." Specifically, eligible health care providers are defined as "public entities, Medicare, or Medicaid enrolled suppliers and providers." **Given this clear language in the CARES Act, we urge you ensure all physicians have access to these critical funding streams.**

Providing physician access to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund is aligned with the intent of the CARES Act, keeping our healthcare workforce employed through the crisis while allowing emergency departments and hospital beds for those that truly need them.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Brad Wenstrup, D.P.M.
Member of Congress

David P. Roe, M.D.
Member of Congress

Roger Marshall, M.D.
Member of Congress

Neal Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress

Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
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Early L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress

Anthony Gonzalez
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Larry Bucshon, M.D.
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Brian Babin, D.D.S.
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