



May 1, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-222  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, S-230  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

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

As the front-line caregivers in the COVID-19 crisis, hospitals and health systems, nurses, physicians and other health care providers are working around the clock to provide the care that our communities and patients need. It is clear that COVID-19 continues to test the capacity of America's health care system and its caregivers on a daily basis. While we greatly appreciate the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Payment Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act and the valuable resources they provided, additional support is urgently needed to ensure that care can continue to be given.

In order to make certain that physicians, nurses and hospitals are able to continue to provide treatments, front-line health care personnel are able to provide care and patients are able access health care services, Congress must act quickly to get needed resources into the health care system. **We ask that you provide additional funding to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund which was enacted to cover expenses for health care providers for preparing and responding to COVID-19 that are otherwise not covered such as increased expenses for personal protective equipment, increased surge capacity, additional health care providers and lost revenue. This fund was designed to quickly get resources to health care providers, and while we greatly appreciate the financial relief this fund has already provided, more is urgently needed.**

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Right now it is imperative that Congress support the front-line nurses, physicians and other health care providers who are working tirelessly to care for others and need additional resources to continue their work. **Congress should establish a separate fund to address the issues related to our health care heroes, outlined below.**

#### **Help for our Health Care Heroes**

Essential front-line workers, including nurses and physicians, deserve support both during and after this crisis. Congress should provide funding: to cover the costs of child and dependent care for essential health care employees; to supply housing and transportation vouchers; for free regular testing of COVID-19 and to ensure front line nurses, physicians and other personnel are prioritized for testing of the virus and antibody testing; for commensurate pay for all health care providers providing care in hospitals and those directly supporting health care providers and patients, such as first responders, technicians, food handling employees and cleaning staff during the COVID-19 pandemic; for survivor benefits for front line nurses and physicians; for education vouchers and student loan repayment; and for liability protections for facilities and front-line health care providers treating patients amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The ability to maintain access to inpatient and outpatient care depends on the ability of hospitals, health systems and health care practices to overcome financial struggles and ensure there is regulatory relief where necessary. Additional support is needed as outlined below.

#### **Support for Access to Care**

In order to support access to care, Congress should: provide loan forgiveness for accelerated payments; allow investor-owned hospitals to participate in Federal Emergency Management Agency funding programs without state contracts; lift the cap on graduate medical education slots; repeal the Institutions for Mental Diseases exclusion until one year after pandemic; and increase outlier payments and extend the eligibility of the diagnosis-related group add-on to long-term care hospitals.

#### **Support for Rural Communities**

Rural and remote communities face unique challenges as they prepare for and treat patients with COVID-19. Facilities and medical personnel in these areas oftentimes can lack the resources to treat what tend to be older and sicker patients. Now, more than ever, it is important that Congress supports these communities by: supporting increased flexibilities for e-prescribing and telehealth; allowing for new Medicare designation to sustain rural communities; supporting

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increased funding for broadband access; and allowing critical access hospitals to cost settle after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, it is important for Congress to address the issue of the uninsured and those who may lose their health insurance through no fault of their own because of the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Support for the Uninsured

During this economic uncertainty and public health emergency, the uninsured should not have to worry about the cost of care. Because of this, we ask Congress to: preserve and build upon private sector coverage by covering the cost of COBRA; increase eligibility to federal subsidies under the Affordable Care Act; allow special enrollment in the health insurance marketplaces; and prohibit finalization of the Medicaid fiscal accountability rule. **Additionally, Congress should allocate new funds, and prohibit taking resources from the funding authorized to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, to cover the cost of treatment for the uninsured because the fund was not intended or funded at an appropriate enough level to cover the uninsured. Covering the uninsured is incredibly important and will require significant financial resources that are not available in the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund.**

Our health care system is dealing with a crisis that continues to evolve and impact communities in ways that need to be addressed with immediacy. Hospitals and health systems, physicians, nurses and other providers of care need to be supported during this critical time in order to meet the needs of their patients and communities. We ask Congress to act now to support the nurses, physicians and hospitals on the front-lines in the battle against COVID-19.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership during this time of crisis.

Sincerely,

/s/

Richard J. Pollack  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
American Hospital Association

/s/

Debbie Hatmaker  
Enterprise Acting Chief Executive Officer  
American Nurses Association