

August 5, 2020

**ILLINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
FEDERAL ADVOCACY ALERT**

SUBJECT: IHA Alert: Urge Congress to Include Hospital Priorities in Next COVID-19 Legislation

Congress is currently negotiating the next COVID-19 relief legislation, which could be the last pandemic relief package for some time. Action is needed now to ensure additional federal support for hospitals and health systems is included and that harmful policies are not part of a final package.

Action Requested: Please contact your Senators and Representatives (see template letter below OR send emails by [clicking here](#)) and urge them to take action on critical hospital and health system priorities in the next COVID-19 legislation, including:

- **Providing Additional Funding for Hospitals.** Congress should provide additional, direct relief funds to hospitals, which are not only coping with a public health crisis, but also a financial crisis.
- **Enacting Limited Liability Protections.** Congress should safeguard frontline providers from legal action by implementing a limited waiver of liability for hospitals and front-line healthcare professionals that will allow providers to continue delivering the best possible care under these challenging conditions.
- **Opposing unworkable OSHA standards.** Congress should oppose efforts to require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to develop and implement a new, comprehensive infectious disease exposure control plan that would further limit availability of N95 masks and reduce hospital inpatient capacity.
- **Making Improvements to the Medicare Accelerated/Advance Payment Program.** Congress should significantly reduce the interest rate and percentage of repayment taken from Medicare claims offset, extend the repayment schedule by an additional 12 months, and consider loan forgiveness. Additionally, Congress should require CMS to restart the program, which was paused on April 27.
- **Extending and Increasing FMAP.** Congress should extend and boost the federal matching assistance percentage by an additional 5.8 percentage points and make it effective from Jan 1, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021.
- **Providing Federal Support for Healthcare Heroes.** Congress should provide additional resources to front-line caregivers and essential workers, such as support for child care, housing, transportation and bonus pay and also ensure payment parity with services delivered in-person.

- **Permanently Extending Telehealth Flexibilities.** Congress should permanently extend flexibilities enacted during the pandemic, including lifting geographic and originating site restrictions.
- **Rejecting harmful surprise billing proposals.** Illinois hospitals support enactment of federal legislation to protect patients from surprise medical bills through a ban on balance billing, however, we strongly oppose policies that would set payment rates for providers in federal statute. Once patients are protected from certain unexpected out-of-network bills, providers and health plans should be permitted to negotiate to ensure fair reimbursement.

A full list of IHA’s COVID-19 legislative priorities is available [here](#). For an infographic illustrating why Illinois hospitals need additional federal resources, please click [here](#).

To find your Representative’s contact information click [here](#). Contact information for Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth may be found [here](#). Please email a copy of your letters to Sarah Macchiarola.

Questions:

Please [contact IHA](#).

TEMPLATE LETTER – Please place on hospital stationary and add your specific details and examples.

August XX, 2020

Dear **Representative/Senator:**

On behalf of our **XXX** employees, our patients, and our community, **HOSPITAL NAME** appreciates the hard work you have done to help protect Illinoisans during this pandemic. This unprecedented public health emergency requires unprecedented actions, and we write with both gratitude and a request for additional assistance.

At **HOSPITAL NAME** we have worked tirelessly to prepare and adapt to care for COVID-19 patients. We have purchased supplies, retrained employees, and reorganized our facility to ensure we are ready to serve our community. Many of these supplies continue to be difficult to find and, when we do find them, they command as much as 10 times the normal price and shipping costs. We have built surge space, tracked down testing kits, and worked to secure medications and other supplies to care for the critically ill. The investments we have made are extraordinary. **[ADD SPECIFIC EXAMPLES.]**

In addition to increased expenses necessary to prepare for surge capacity, we stopped performing non-essential services for an extended period. These services are a significant

portion of our normal revenue, and we are now in a financial as well as a health crisis.

Congress has acted swiftly to establish and fund the Provider Relief Fund, and we are grateful. However, several of the distributions have been based on formulas that do not offer appropriate recognition of the investments we have made or the lost revenue we have incurred. In fact, we have only received \$XXX and estimate our investment in our COVID-19 response and lost revenue to be more than \$XXXX. Specifically, we ask that you and your colleagues in the Congress include the following hospital and health system priorities in the next COVID-19 response package:

- **Additional Resources for Hospitals.** Congress should direct additional, direct relief funds to hospitals, which are not only coping with a public health crisis, but also a financial crisis.
- **Limited Liability Protections.** Congress should safeguard frontline providers from legal action by implementing a limited waiver of liability for hospitals and healthcare professionals.
- **Improvements to the Medicare Accelerated/Advance Payment Program.** Congress should take action to significantly improve the repayment requirements and consider loan forgiveness.
- **Extend and Increase FMAP.** Congress should extend and boost the federal matching assistance percentage an additional 5.8 percentage points from Jan 1, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021.
- **Federal Support for Healthcare Heroes.** Congress should provide additional resources to front-line caregivers and essential workers, such as support for child care, housing, transportation and bonus pay.
- **Expand Telehealth.** Congress should permanently extend flexibilities enacted during the pandemic, including removing geographic and originating site restrictions.

As you work on additional relief for our country, please keep in mind that the successful reopening of the economy will depend on the security of the healthcare safety net provided by hospitals like HOSPITAL NAME.

ADD ADDITIONAL COMMENTS and specific hospital examples related to priorities for your organization, such as why additional funds are needed, the importance of liability protections, and how telehealth flexibilities have benefitted patients.

Thank you again for your commitment to HOSPITAL NAME and our patients.

Sincerely,

NAME, TITLE, CONTACT INFORMATION