

May 4, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

On behalf of Illinois' more than 200 hospitals and nearly 40 health systems, we thank the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for its actions to support healthcare providers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including through the Provider Relief Fund (PRF). **We write to request that HHS swiftly release remaining PRF funds and extend the utilization period beyond June 30, 2021.**

To date, disbursements from the PRF have been a financial lifeline to providers by helping to offset unprecedented financial losses and expenses incurred during the first half of 2020. However, **Illinois hospitals and health systems experienced deep financial losses and increased expenses during the second half of 2020 and first quarter of 2021, putting numerous hospitals in an extremely tenuous financial position as they await the Phase 4 General and rural distributions required by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act. We urge you to quickly release remaining PRF funds.**

Additionally, as we await guidance on these disbursements, we urge HHS to extend the PRF utilization period through the end of the calendar year in which the public health emergency ends. Current PRF guidance indicates providers must spend or return all funds to HHS by June 30, 2021. However, the pandemic is far from over, with current predictions from the administration indicating the pandemic will likely continue through at least the end of the calendar year. Further, Congressionally required disbursements have yet to be made to assist providers with COVID-related costs and lost revenues from the third quarter of 2020 through the first quarter of 2021, and the application period will not open until at least the second quarter of 2021. Taken together, the uncertainty of the pandemic and the lack of timely guidance and additional funds will make it difficult for providers to spend down needed funds by June 30, 2021.

Secretary Becerra, thank you for considering these important actions. We appreciate the work HHS has done thus far to guide the healthcare industry through these unprecedented times and we look forward to working with you as we continue to respond to the pandemic and work toward a recovery phase.

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Sincerely,

A.J. Wilhelmi
President & CEO

cc:

The Honorable Dick Durbin
The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
The Honorable Bobby Rush (D-1-IL)
The Honorable Robin Kelly (D-2-IL)
The Honorable Marie Newman (D-3-IL)
The Honorable Jesús “Chuy” García (D-4-IL)
The Honorable Mike Quigley (D-5-IL)
The Honorable Sean Casten (D-6-IL)
The Honorable Danny K. Davis (D-7-IL)
The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-8-IL)
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The Honorable Rodney L. Davis (R-13-IL)
The Honorable Lauren Underwood (D-14-IL)
The Honorable Mary Miller (R-15-IL)
The Honorable Adam Kinzinger (R-16-IL)
The Honorable Cheri Bustos (D-17-IL)
The Honorable Darin LaHood (R-18-IL)