

March 20, 2020

Sent electronically

Dear Members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of our more than 200 member hospitals and nearly 40 health systems, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) thanks you for supporting hospitals and health systems in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the spread of the virus grows at tremendous speed throughout the state and nation, it is clear that action from Washington needs to be equally fast and strong to counter the very real threats hospitals are facing today.

In order to support the care of patients with the virus, protect our healthcare workforce, and meet Illinoisans' other urgent healthcare needs, IHA asks for your immediate support on the following:

Direct Payments to Hospitals to Support Care Delivery

Illinois hospitals must have a reliable cash flow as they expand their ability to care for current and anticipated COVID-19 cases. To support these efforts, Congress should:

- Establish immediate and ongoing supplemental periodic interim payments to acute care and critical access hospitals
- Establish a Medicare add-on payment to account for services, including longer lengths of stay for COVID-19 patients
- Provide direct funding for hospitals to create additional bed capacity, including by establishing alternative sites for transferring patients needing sub or post-acute care and/or isolation
- Establish a payment pool to treat uninsured individuals with COVID-19
- Increase the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for areas facing the highest burden

Funding for Emergency Expenses Related to COVID-19

Illinois hospitals are working around the clock to prepare for increased surge capacity, with many being forced to take extraordinary measures. Congress should make funds immediately and directly available to hospitals for emergency expenses, including:

- Loss of revenues due to the suspension of elective services
- Ensuring the safety, adequacy, continuity and wellbeing of the healthcare workforce (including by providing healthcare workers who are caring for children and older family members with access to childcare and elder-care, as well as other social services)
- Sourcing and purchasing critical supplies and equipment

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- Testing costs
- Construction and retrofitting of facilities to provide separate screening areas

Shoring Up Hospital Resources

Illinois hospitals have been subject to significant payment cuts and resource reductions in recent years. Now, when the healthcare safety net may be nearing a breaking point, is simply not the time to allow these cuts (proposed and enacted) to continue. Illinois hospitals ask Congress to:

- Suspend the Medicare sequester for at least the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak
- Eliminate Medicaid disproportionate share hospital cuts
- Delay or repeal burdensome Medicare or Medicaid regulations that result in payment reductions to providers
- Prevent the implementation of the Medicaid Fiscal Accountability Rule

Finally, we urge Congress and the Administration to work together to shore up the supply chain in any and all ways necessary to dramatically increase the production of protective equipment, ventilators, medication and testing supplies. Illinois hospitals and healthcare workers are doing everything within their power to care for their patients and communities during this pandemic. We respectfully request you take swift, decisive action on the requests outlined in this letter.

Sincerely,

A.J. Wilhelmi
President & CEO