

AMERICA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

May 10, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Becerra:

As representatives of our nation's hospitals and health systems, we are writing to urge you to continue support for our hospitals, health care workers, and most importantly, our patients during the ongoing pandemic by extending the June 30 deadline by which providers must use their COVID-19 Provider Relief Fund (PRF) payments, and instead use as a guideline the length of the Public Health Emergency (PHE). We also ask you to expedite distribution of the remaining PRF resources.

The work of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic continues, despite the relief that is currently being provided by an increase in vaccination levels. Our facilities continue to treat tens of thousands of patients and intensive care unit capacity is still high in some parts of the country. We anticipate financial challenges will persist for America's hospitals and health systems, with more financial impact expected due to the pandemic. According to reports released by the American Hospital Association, hospitals were projected to lose to at least \$323.1 billion through the end of 2020, with additional projected losses this year of as much as \$122 billion.

Congress has allocated \$178 billion to date to aid all types of health care providers through the PRF, and designated in the most recent COVID-19 relief package an additional \$8.5 billion through the Rural Relief Fund. However, not all of the funds have been distributed, and those that have may not yet have been fully utilized by the recipients. We previously noted the ongoing financial burden our members are facing; add to this the uncertainty regarding when the pandemic will ease more considerably to allow for a full return to "business as usual," such as regular wellness visits and the resumption of scheduled surgeries. Our hospitals will continue to face challenges beyond June 30 in providing adequate staffing, supplies, personal protective equipment, testing and vaccinations. We therefore request that you intercede on behalf of our hospitals and health systems and provide critical assistance by expending the remaining PRF resources and tying the utilization date to the PHE.

Thank you for assisting us with this request and for your ongoing support for our nation's hospitals, providers and patients. We look forward to continuing to work with you as we recover from the COVID-19 public health pandemic.

Sincerely,

America's Essential Hospitals
American Hospital Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Children's Hospital Association
Federation of American Hospitals
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
Premier healthcare alliance
Vizient, Inc.