

April 21, 2021

Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Congressional Leaders:

We appreciate your leadership in this time of unprecedented national crisis and thank you for your actions to strengthen America's health care infrastructure with desperately needed financial support. As you know, at the beginning of the pandemic crisis, our nation's hospitals canceled hundreds-of-thousands of elective surgeries and non-emergent patient tests at the government's request to help assure adequate hospital capacity. As the coronavirus continues to surge across the country, our hospitals are facing new and increased challenges that put significant stress on our resources. In many parts of the country, there is a severe and growing shortage of nurses and other caregivers requiring additional financial support.

Despite Congress' help last year by extending the repayment terms of the expanded accelerated and advanced payment policy for Medicare providers, as authorized in Section 3719 of the CARES Act, loan repayment began March 30. While no one could have known that the coronavirus infection rate would reignite this year, and cause a continuing strain on health care providers, loan repayment now removes precious resources from our use as the coronavirus and its variants continue to infect tens of thousands of people every day.

We write today to respectfully request that Congress, once again, delay the start of the repayment of Medicare loans an additional year. Many of us have needed to tap into those loans to sustain our hospital's ability to care for our communities. Some have not yet used the loans because of concerns about being able to repay them and the hardship that would cause. Either way, requiring loan repayment now makes already difficult circumstances more challenging.

As you know, not all hospitals and providers are financially impacted in the same way as we care for our communities. However, extending the Medicare loans an additional year will help assure that hospitals will remain appropriately staffed and resourced. It would also help assure that loans will be repaid to the Trust Fund because hospitals that used the loans would have more time to recover their financial footing.

We ask you to make this policy change as soon as possible. Unless the loan terms are extended, hundreds of hospitals will likely face an insurmountable financial crisis as COVID-19 continues to ravage the nation. It is not an overstatement to say that some hospitals will be forced to close, thus further straining the capacity of those that remain. In rural communities, the threat of closure is real – and the downstream effect to communities would be catastrophic. Those that do

not close could be forced to significantly reduce health care services over the next several months.

As you know, these Medicare loans have very stringent accountability requirements and also provide Congress and the public with complete transparency.

Thank you for consideration of this request. We stand ready to work with you in every way to support our men and women on the frontline caring for those with the coronavirus. These heroes need to know that the nation will provide whatever it takes to assure they will have the resources to continue the battle.

Sincerely,

Aultman Health Foundation
Ohio

Baptist Health System
Kentucky

CentraCare
Minnesota

Hackensack Meridian Health
New Jersey

Jefferson Health
New Jersey, Pennsylvania

Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare
Tennessee

OSF Health
Illinois, Michigan

Piedmont Healthcare
Georgia

ProMedica
Ohio, Michigan

Presbyterian Healthcare Services
New Mexico

The Queen's Health Systems
Hawaii