

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to thank you for your efforts to distribute funding from the Provider Relief Fund to the facilities caring for individuals infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). However, we are very concerned that a disproportionately low amount of this funding has been distributed to children's hospitals.¹ We respectfully request that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) move to quickly provide additional funding for children's hospitals. While, thankfully, COVID-19 has not affected nearly the number of children as adults, there are reasons to consider this additional funding.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals – including children's hospitals – were required to halt elective procedures. Unlike adults, deferred care in children is not “elective”. Deferred care for a child can include orthopedic surgery to straighten a spine or a major cardiac procedure. Caring for children is not the same as adults, making children's hospitals unique institutions. Care for children requires highly specialized expert knowledge about health and disease at all stages of child development. Further, children's hospitals provide these services to a large Medicaid population – more than half of children's hospital patients are covered by the program.

Although the novel coronavirus has not had as widespread an impact on the pediatric population, we have seen serious pediatric COVID-19-related conditions. For example, we are beginning to learn more about multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children MIS-C, a condition that is believed to be a complication of COVID-19.² While MIS-C is rare, its effects on children are severe. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has a study which hopefully will answer many questions about this virus in children.³

Despite differences in children and adults, children's hospitals have been impacted financially with significant loss of revenue. Many children's hospitals have had to resort to furloughs and lay-offs at a time when they are also preparing for possible increases in COVID-19 patients or

¹ <https://www.childrenshospitals.org/Newsroom/Press-Releases/2020/HHS-Distribution-of-CARES-Act-to-Date-Has-Overlooked-Our-Nations-Childrens-Hospitals>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/mis-c.html>

³ <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/study-determine-incidence-novel-coronavirus-infection-us-children-begins>

more complex cases as a result of deferred care. Social distancing protocols have decreased face-to-face outpatient visits and resulted in deferred surgeries which has significantly impacted hospital revenues. Our children's hospitals have responded by providing remote care wherever possible at a significant loss. They have worked tirelessly to make sure children are getting the care they need. While doing this, children's hospitals have had to increase expenditures in anticipation of a possible surge in novel coronavirus patients, including investments in personal protective equipment to keep patients and staff safe.

In summation, we want to thank you for your leadership during this trying time and to respectfully request that you include additional funding for children's hospitals.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

/s/Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

/s/Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/Cory Gardner
United States Senator

/s/Thomas R. Carper
United State Senator

/s/Mitt Romney
United States Senator

/s/Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/Tom Cotton
United States Senator

/s/Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/Kelly Loeffler
United States Senator

/s/Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/Deb Fischer
United States Senator

/s/Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/Pat Roberts
United States Senator

/s/Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/David Perdue
United States Senator

/s/Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/John Boozman
United States Senator

/s/Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/Rob Portman
United States Senator

/s/Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/Martha McSally
United States Senator

/s/Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/Mike Lee
United States Senator

/s/Patty Murray
United States Senator

/s/John Cornyn
United States Senator

/s/Krysten Sinema
United States Senator

/s/Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

/s/Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

/s/Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

/s/Jerry Moran
United States Senator

