



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 205105

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy,

As you know, the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase in our country. As of March 19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 10,442 total cases, with this number expected to grow exponentially over the coming days.

Health care providers, including independent physicians and practices, are on the frontlines fighting this virus in their communities. Independent physicians and practices are also running small businesses themselves, and are worried about keeping the lights on even as they try to best serve their patients by shifting to virtual care to the extent possible, delaying elective or non-urgent care, working with state and community leaders with greater frequency, and implementing the significant volume of new guidance coming from the federal and state governments on a daily basis.

**We are writing to urge you to include policies that provide relief for these frontline physicians and practices in the next COVID-19 stimulus bill.** Economic and administrative relief is urgently needed to ensure independent physicians and practices are able to devote their full attention to treating the clinical needs of their patients. Congress should consider a variety of measures, some of which provide immediate relief and others that improve the financial outlook for these providers over the long-term.

Specifically, as part of any legislation to provide additional funds to combat COVID-19, we encourage you to consider the following to provide immediate relief:

1. Reprieve in reporting requirements for government programs in 2020, including for the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) program.
2. Significant new funding for the U.S. Small Business Association's lending program, including specific set asides for independent physicians and practices.
3. Delay implementation of the sequester for 2 years and increase funding to support Medicare physician services during the COVID-19 national emergency.
4. Support learning programs that enable rural and underserved areas to coordinate with other clinicians that are responding to and treating cases of COVID-19 so that these providers may learn from others. Ideally, this would be funded through a federal funding mechanism to speed implementation of these learning programs and to avoid patchwork implementation by states.

We also encourage you to consider the following to ensure that independent practices and physicians continue to have an incentive to adopt value-based care models, even as they recover from the financial toll that COVID-19 is expected to take on their practices:



1. Extend the advanced alternative payment model (AAPM) bonus available to providers through the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) for an additional five years.
2. Pass legislation to improve the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) for all accountable care organizations (ACOs), but especially those in rural areas (S. 2648/H.R. 5212).

Thank you for considering these important priorities, and please feel free to reach out to the Partnership to Empower Physician-Led Care (PECP) if you have questions about the impact of COVID-19 on independent physicians and practices. We appreciate your leadership during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Kristen McGovern  
Executive Director