

June 8, 2020

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
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. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

Thank you for your leadership during these difficult times. We appreciate your efforts to secure, stabilize and reinvigorate the health care system amidst this crisis.

As organizations representing patients, physicians, health plans, employers and the business community, we are united in our support for primary care. Primary care has – and continues to play – a critical role in our national security in the short and long-term by strengthening our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic; providing a foundation for states and communities to safely re-open; and continuing the important work of moving our health care system toward value-based care, even in the face of tremendous financial challenges.

We strongly urge Congress to provide dedicated funding to primary care physicians and practices in future legislative relief packages through a simple, streamlined mechanism that places as little burden as possible on the clinician. While we appreciate the resources you have already made available for all eligible physicians and health care clinicians, very little of this relief has reached primary care practices, and we are concerned that the administrative burden required to secure currently proposed future funding will be too onerous for many small practices.

Primary care practices are struggling as patients stay home, revenues drop to just a fraction of what they were pre-COVID and expenses increase as a result of the pandemic. Dedicated funding for primary care is needed to ensure the sustainability of primary care and improve the nation's ability to respond, re-open and resume treatment, and recover from this national emergency. Primary care deserves your support for the following reasons:

Respond. One of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) first instructions to the American public was to call their doctor if they experienced COVID symptoms. Primary care clinicians responded enthusiastically and with force to address their patients' medical needs. Practices worked diligently to procure the necessary protective equipment and transition to virtual models of care. They continue to serve as the first line of defense in many communities, putting themselves at risk of infection, to ensure hospital space is reserved only for those with the most urgent needs. They will also be responsible for administering vaccines when available.

Re-Open and Resume Treatment. As states continue to re-open, we will depend on primary care clinicians to monitor the day-today health needs of our communities. We need them to continue and expand their capacity to test and treat potential cases of COVID; to resume treatment of chronic diseases that have gone unchecked during the pandemic; to treat common ailments that require lower acuity care; to provide needed maternity, pediatric and behavioral

health care; and so much more. Re-opening our communities and meeting the ongoing health care needs of patients and families, in a measured, safe way depends on a strong primary care infrastructure.

Recover. To continue the momentum created by decades of effort, we will need primary care practices to not only survive the pandemic, but to continue to invest in new models of care. Their ongoing commitment to value-based care is vital to ensure we recover in a way that is not just a return to the status quo, but a step forward for patients and our nation's health care system.

Without action by Congress, primary care practices across the country may close over the coming weeks and months, further exacerbating primary care shortages and leaving some communities without access to care. This will jeopardize our COVID response, weakening our ability to protect patients, not just from this pandemic, but other public health emergencies in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Aledade

Alliance of Community Health Plans

American Academy of Family Physicians

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American College of Physicians

Association for Community Affiliated Plans

Better Medicare Alliance

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Caregiver Action Network

Direct Primary Care Coalition

Families USA

Mental Health America

National Coalition on Health Care

National Hispanic Medical Association

National Minority Quality Forum

National Partnership for Women & Families

Pacific Business Group on Health

Partnership to Empower Physician-Led Care

Primary Care Collaborative

Privia Health