

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

I am writing on behalf of the National Alliance of Safety-Net Hospitals (NASh), a coalition of private safety-net hospitals, to encourage you to distribute as soon as possible the \$100 billion designated in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to assist health care providers as they deal head-on with the biggest public health crisis our country has faced in more than a century.

NASH is most grateful for how much the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have done so far, and continue to do, to give us the tools we need to help lead this fight and meet the needs of the generally low-income communities our hospitals serve. We appreciate the department's commitment, and that of the White House and Congress, to ensuring access to care for the uninsured during this national public health emergency. As you know, caring for the uninsured is not something private safety-net hospitals do only when there is a national health emergency; it is something these hospitals do every day in communities across the country.

Hospitals and other providers need these resources – and need them in a very timely manner. Hospitals invested heavily in preparations for the challenge to come and are still paying for those and continuing investments at a time when their cash flow is at an historic low because they are no longer performing elective surgery, which provides a major portion of their revenue. Thus, hospitals need this money to pay our bills, to keep the lights on and the medical supplies coming in, and to pay our courageous caregivers.

We encourage you to distribute the \$100 billion in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to providers as soon as possible to ensure that all Americans have access to COVID-19 services. At the same time, NASH recognizes the importance of finding ways to care for those without insurance; this is a challenge private safety-net hospitals face every day, pandemic or not. We urge you to work with your colleagues in the administration and with Congress to ensure that all Americans have access to health insurance during this time of national crisis while preserving the funding hospitals need, and that was specifically directed to us, to ensure our ability to care for all of our patients when they turn to us for help.

Sincerely,

Ellen J. Kugler
Executive Director

