



June 29, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP), I am writing to urge the Senate to consider additional legislation to respond to the unprecedented public health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A continued delay in Senate action will stifle the ability of our communities to respond to COVID-19 and hurt millions of Americans who have lost jobs and health coverage and worry about where and how they will get their next meal.

In April, ACHP proposed several novel approaches to help ensure millions of Americans have access to care, maintain continuity of their current coverage and care, and provide a backstop for the health insurance market working in their communities during this unprecedented public health emergency. Although slightly different from our recommendations, we are pleased that the House included several of our issues, including a two-month special enrollment period (SEP) for the federal exchange, COBRA subsidies, additional Medicaid funding to states and risk corridors for exchanges and MA were included in the Health & Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. We applaud the House for dedicating \$75 Billion to COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, as it is clear the coronavirus continues to spread at alarming rates.

Without Senate action, our health care system and our economy will continue to suffer as evidenced by daily records of COVID infection being set across southern and western states. Since this crisis began, unemployment has risen from 6 million to more than 20 million and Medicaid programs across the country are experiencing increased enrollment and spending. Health Management Associates estimates that anywhere from 10.6 million to 23 million additional enrollees could be added to the Medicaid rolls before this crisis is over. In May, Kentucky reported an 8.1 percent increase in Medicaid enrollment over February 2020. In Florida, the Agenda for Health Care Administration analysis estimates that as many as 437,390 additional Floridians might turn to Medicaid for health care over the next year with an expected cost of over \$1 billion. The Kaiser Family Foundation recently estimated that the number of individuals losing employer sponsored insurance coverage as a result of COVID-19 could reach nearly 27 million. Without additional action by Congress, these individuals may have no option except enrolling in Medicaid or being uninsured.

Recently, ACHP and AMCP surveyed adults across the country about their attitudes and behaviors toward health care services and settings. Our survey found that many, including vulnerable populations, are delaying care. Specifically, survey respondents resoundingly confirmed what the economic data suggests, with 72 percent reporting changes in their use of health care services. Forty-one percent reported delaying health care services, which translates to 93.2 million adults, age 18-74, who did not receive expected care and treatment in a 90-day period. Seniors and people with chronic conditions delayed care in even higher percentages, 53 percent and 60 percent, respectively. The impact this postponement of care may have was recently driven home by the

National Cancer Institute estimate that there will be an additional 10,000 deaths from breast and colorectal cancers over the next 10 years.

As the Senate crafts the next legislative package, it is imperative that you include measures to ensure that the United States does not lose the gains made in telehealth. As you know, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) included provisions from the CONNECT for Health Act to increase telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries during the pandemic, including waiving geographic restrictions, expanding eligible providers (non-physicians) for furnishing telehealth services, and establishing permanent authority for easing state licensure restrictions. We believe Congress needs to not only extend those provisions and make them permanent, but to go beyond those proposals and leverage telehealth as a fundamental tool of the “new normal” of safe, convenient, efficient modern health care delivery.

I encourage you both to work in a bipartisan manner to pass legislation quickly and send to the President for his signature before leaving for August recess. The longer we wait the worse the impact will be on Americans, health care and the economy.

Thank you for your consideration. I am available at your convenience to discuss ACHP’s recommendations or details on our national survey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ceci Connolly". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Ceci Connolly
President & CEO