



*A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care*

January 28, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, service providers and organizations, I am writing to urge you to provide a bipartisan legislative package to further address the public health and economic crises in the country.

Catholic hospitals, long-term care facilities and providers continue on the frontlines to care for patients, families and their communities affected by the coronavirus and need additional resources and support. They are also witnessing the negative economic consequences and urgent needs of families and communities as the pandemic continues to surge throughout our nation. As Congress considers the next COVID relief package, we urge you to include the following targeted measures.

**Continued support for front-line providers:** The record-breaking surge in new infections has strained the capacity of hospitals including many of our members. They require continued financial assistance and protection for frontline health workers so that they can continue to care for their communities. Namely, we ask that a legislative package include these vital components:

- **Additional resources for testing, personal protective equipment (PPE) and the Provider Relief Fund** to support providers, protect patients and expand access to care and testing, which is still critically needed in many hospitals and long-term care facilities;
- **Extension of the moratorium on Medicare sequestration cuts** beyond the March 31, 2021 deadline to provide financial stability during this public health emergency and **providing loan forgiveness for safety-net hospitals and providers** in the Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payments (AAP) program;
- **Extend the Public Health Emergency telehealth flexibilities** for two years to ensure greater outreach and care to vulnerable groups, especially minority and rural communities.

**Strengthening the national and global COVID-19 vaccination effort:** CHA recognizes the need to ensure all people have equitable access to a safe, affordable and effective vaccine. We ask that Congress:

- **Strengthen vaccine distribution** by fully funding a coordinated federal response which increases vaccines, supplies and provides timely information to providers on vaccine availability and distribution;
- **Improve vaccine outreach efforts** by providing at least \$20 billion for a national vaccination outreach and distribution program for hospitals, long-term care facilities and community partners to ensure all people, regardless of their immigration status, have access to a vaccine;
- **Ensure affordable access to vaccines for low-income communities** by increasing the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage for vaccines to 100%;
- **Support additional funding for international humanitarian and global health and vaccination programs** by contributing to the global vaccination effort and providing critical personal protective equipment to frontline health care workers and to help prevent, diagnose and treat COVID-19.

**Protecting and expanding health coverage:** Health coverage is a vital component of treatment during this pandemic as well as an essential component of economic recovery. We ask that Congress:

- Protect and expand health care coverage and access for the most vulnerable by **increasing federal Medicaid funding to states, raising the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) to at least 12% and ensuring continuous coverage for beneficiaries** to protect vulnerable individuals, children and families;
- **Increase the value and eligibility of premium tax subsidies** in the Health Insurance Marketplaces while guaranteeing that no one will pay more than 8.5% of their income for health insurance and increase funding for outreach and enrollment programs under the Affordable Care Act (ACA);
- **Reverse the troubling increase in children losing health coverage** by increasing state resources for outreach and enrollment in the Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

**Addressing health disparities, promoting equity and protecting immigrant families:** We recognize the profound effects that health disparities have had during the pandemic on underserved and vulnerable populations. We believe the next relief package should:

- Address the disparate effect of COVID-19 on people of color and their communities by **directing additional funding and support to states, localities and community-based organizations for targeted outreach, testing and treatment** for vulnerable individuals and communities;
- **Ensure states can use emergency Medicaid coverage for all immigrants** who need COVID-19 testing, vaccines or treatment and do not otherwise qualify for Medicaid;
- **Support for language assistance resources and outreach** for limited English proficient populations and other minorities;
- **Collect, analyze and disseminate accurate public health data using race and ethnicity** in order to understand and effectively address the pandemic.

**Bolstering the Social Safety Net:** Nonprofit social service providers and individuals continue to need further assistance to meet their basic needs in this unprecedented time. We ask that Congress:

- **Support access to housing by increasing funding** for emergency rental assistance, housing vouchers, and 202 housing programs;
- **Extend the eviction and foreclosure moratoriums** through September 30, 2021;
- **Increase the benefits for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** for all recipients through the length of the public health and economic crisis and reducing the state SNAP match requirement;
- **Support homelessness assistance outreach programs** by providing additional Emergency Solutions Grants to state and local communities to secure additional permanent and congregate housing for individuals experiencing homelessness;
- **Raise the cap and extend the Paycheck Protection Loan program** to assist nonprofits providing critical social services to those in need.

**Supporting maternal care, behavioral health and access to quality palliative care:**

- CHA supports **promoting access to prenatal and postpartum care by expanding Medicaid coverage for one year postpartum**, expanding presumptive eligibility for pregnant women and expanding maternal home visitation programs to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers and infants. We urge you to include the bipartisan *Helping Medicaid Offer Maternity Services (MOMS) Act of 2019* in the next relief package and increase funding for maternal home visiting programs as an important first step in improving maternal health;
- **Increasing federal support for programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** to address the mental health, substance abuse and opioid challenges faced by individuals, families and communities;
- **Increasing support for and access to palliative care** by including the *Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act* with additional immediate funding to train and equip providers to provide expanded palliative care.

As we all work to heal and support our communities during this pandemic, we express our hope that Congress and the Administration will work together to protect and support our communities, prevent further spread of the coronavirus, increase vaccinations and bring this crisis to an end. We again urge swift passage of legislation that can deliver the necessary resources to save lives.

Sincerely,



Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM  
President and CEO

CC: Members of the House of Representatives and Senate