



*A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care*

February 11, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

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, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for several of the provisions being considered by the Committee in its COVID-19 relief and budget reconciliation legislation. These legislative proposals contain a number of critically important provisions for bringing immediate relief to individuals, families and the communities we serve.

CHA continues to advocate for a just and equitable health care system that is affordable and accessible to everyone, paying special attention to poor and vulnerable individuals. Additionally, we have urged policy makers to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines and to first consider populations identified as most at risk for suffering negative health outcomes from COVID-19—namely the elderly, the poor and communities of color. The pandemic and negative economic consequences have exacerbated health disparities across the country. We believe the provisions being considered are critical steps toward addressing the problems faced by individuals, families and vulnerable communities.

The Medicaid program is a foundation of our nation's safety net especially during this unprecedented time. While language increasing the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) was not included in this legislation, **we urge you to add an increase to the FMAP of at least 12%**. This additional funding is essential for states to ensure that beneficiaries have continuous coverage during this public health emergency. We also urge committee members to support the following proposed provisions that expand health care coverage and access through the Medicaid program:

- Expanding access for nearly 4 million uninsured low-income adults in the country by providing incentives to the 14 remaining states to expand their Medicaid programs by offering a 95% FMAP for two years;
- Fully covering COVID-19 vaccines and treatment for Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries;
- Promoting maternal and infant health by extending Medicaid post-partum coverage from 60 days to one year following birth; and
- Allowing recently incarcerated individuals to be eligible for Medicaid 30 days before their release as a pathway to continue treatments once re-entering society.

Additionally, we support the following provisions that are aimed at strengthening the national and

global COVID-19 vaccination effort and urge the Committee to promote health equity with these policies:

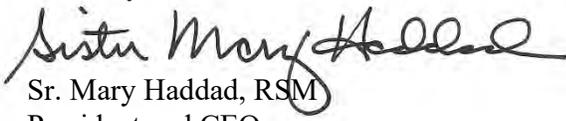
- Providing \$7.5 billion in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for vaccine promotion, tracking and administration including \$1 billion to promote vaccine confidence;
- Allocating \$46 billion to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for testing, tracing and monitoring activities including the implementation of a national strategy; supporting the development and distribution of tests and personal protective equipment; and investing in community based approaches to address the virus; and
- Providing \$1.8 billion to HHS for the purchase, procurement and distribution of COVID-19 tests and testing supplies, personal protective equipment for staff and residents of congregate settings including long-term care facilities.

Lastly, we commend the Committee's work to target racial disparities made evident by the pandemic while also addressing the need for behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment in the country. We urge support for the following provisions:

- Providing \$6 billion for tribal health programs through the Indian Health Service (IHS), and a 100% FMAP for services provided to Medicaid beneficiaries at Urban Indian Organizations and Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems; and
- Increasing federal support for programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Health Resources Services Administration to address the mental health, substance abuse and opioid challenges faced by individuals, families and communities while providing a 100% FMAP for mobile crisis intervention services.

We urge bipartisan support for these provisions to protect and expand coverage, prevent further spread of the coronavirus and support vulnerable individuals, families and children. As we all work to heal and support our communities during this pandemic, we express our hope that Congress will move swiftly to approve legislation that can deliver the necessary resources to save lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Mary Haddad". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM  
President and CEO

CC: Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee