Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Eric Hargan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar and Deputy Secretary Hargan,

The challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis have put our nation, and especially our health care safety net, under tremendous strain. Congress and President Trump responded to this dire situation with the passage of Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. Combined, these two bills directed $175 billion for provider relief through the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund (PHSSEF).

We are grateful that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has moved quickly to distribute these funds to America's health care providers. Over the last few months, provider relief funding has been allocated to COVID high impact providers, skilled nursing facilities, Medicare safety net hospitals, the Indian Health Service, rural providers, and a general distribution based on net patient revenues. We recognize the complexity of this task and that HHS was asked to move quickly and direct funds accurately. In the best of circumstances this is difficult, and the challenge is greater when dealing with high-volume Medicaid providers for whom HHS has less data.

While we are thankful for your efforts, we remain concerned by the level of funding received by children's hospitals. To date, the Department has targeted allocations for unique and vulnerable groups, such as rural and high impact providers. Children's hospitals, however, have not received assistance comparable to other categories of health care providers.

Under state and federal guidance, children's hospitals have played an integral role in fighting COVID-19 by providing testing services, cancelling non-essential services, transforming facilities to care for children and adult COVID patients, and absorbing growing costs for personal protective equipment and other critical supplies. As a result, America's children's hospitals have experienced declines in revenue upwards of 40% and approximately $2 billion per month in losses.

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Therefore, we respectfully request an additional allocation for children's hospitals out of the remaining provider relief funds already appropriated by Congress. The children's hospitals in our communities are the pediatric health care safety net, delivering lifesaving care, conducting groundbreaking research, and partnering in the fight against COVID. Providing them with an additional allocation from the PHSSEF will ensure the continued safety of our children, families, and communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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BILL JOHNSON
Member of Congress

WARREN DAVIDSON
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

BETTY MCCOLLUM
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SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.
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MARCY KAPTUR
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