

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to urge you to expedite efforts at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide more grant dollars to health care providers through the Provider Relief Fund established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. These grant funds have provided vital financial support to health care providers in New Hampshire who are struggling with increased expenses and reduced revenues associated with our nation's response to the novel coronavirus or "COVID-19." However, more support is needed in order for these health care providers to continue their essential work to confront this pandemic.

Congress provided \$100 billion in funding for these health care provider grants through the CARES Act, along with an additional \$75 billion under the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. Thus far, HHS has awarded approximately \$77.2 billion, which includes grants to health care providers in rural areas, as well as grants for hospitals in high-impact areas or "hotspots" that had more than 100 hospitalizations for COVID-19 treatment as of April 10, 2020.¹ HHS has also announced additional grants of yet-to-be-published amounts for hospitals treating uninsured patients with COVID-19 and for subsets of Medicaid providers.

Of the grants awarded so far, New Hampshire health care providers have received more than \$295 million. Included in this total is approximately \$115 million that was provided to health care providers in New Hampshire's rural census tracts and counties. These rural awards have been critical to helping rural providers that were already struggling financially deal with the significant revenue losses resulting from cancelled and postponed elective procedures and non-emergency visits. However, these providers will continue to need more support. Health care providers in non-rural areas of New Hampshire are also in desperate need of additional resources to support liquidity and enable these providers to continue to treat patients who have severe cases of COVID-19.

For instance, there are non-rural hospitals in southern New Hampshire that have provided care for a significant portion of the hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in the state. Yet these hospitals have not received the financial support they need because New Hampshire hospitals have not been considered "hot spots" that are eligible for funding based on COVID-19 hospitalization rates. When the Department provides future rounds of grant dollars that are based

¹ Separate from the hotspot and rural-focused grants, \$50 billion out of the \$77.2 billion total has been awarded proportionally on the basis of each health care provider's historical revenue relative to overall health spending.

on COVID-19 hospitalization rates, it will be important to ensure that a portion of the dollars are set aside to ensure that hospitals in every state can receive funds. Providing such a set-aside would ensure that hospitals within New Hampshire that are treating significant shares of the state's COVID-19 cases are getting funding to support these efforts. We urge the Department to work with state officials to determine how to best distribute future allocations of the Provider Relief fund to help ensure support for every provider facility in need.

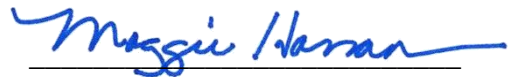
In addition to any actions to better support these New Hampshire health care providers with significant COVID-19 caseloads, as a general matter, an expeditious effort to get more Provider Relief fund dollars out to our communities will help lift all health care providers in our state. With revenues expected to continue to lag over the next several months for many health care providers, action now is critical.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to help ensure that frontline health care providers receive the support they need to continue their vital work. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



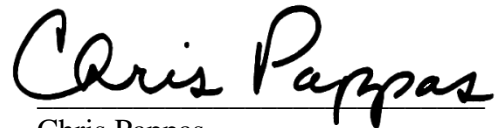
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress