

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2310

May 21, 2020

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

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

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer,

As Congress considers additional legislation to address the COVID-19 crisis, we strongly urge the inclusion of relief specifically dedicated for children's hospitals and pediatric health care providers.

We continue to learn more about the effect of COVID-19 on children, and are deeply troubled by reports of a new inflammatory disease in children that may be linked to the coronavirus outbreak. As this outbreak continues, we are worried about the pandemic's negative impact on the national network of pediatric health care providers, our best experts in caring for our country's young people. Children's hospitals treat chronically and acutely ill infants and children; provide care to children with disabilities and complex medical conditions; and also serve as hubs for specialized pediatric training and research discovery. Our nation's children's hospitals impact the health and wellbeing of every child in the U.S. and serve as the safety-net provider for millions of children.

Following the first U.S. cases of COVID-19 in January, the Surgeon General and many state governors requested that all hospitals cancel or reschedule non-urgent or elective surgical procedures to create capacity to accommodate the growing volume of COVID-19 cases, preserve necessary supplies, and ensure the safety of patients and hospital staff. Children's hospitals joined the national effort to support the public health crisis, but these deferred volumes have resulted in significant revenue losses and the delay in care has been distressing to parents and patients who have often waited months for an important diagnostic or therapeutic treatment. Additionally, children's hospitals are facing new financial challenges due to an increased need for personal protective equipment (PPE), testing and other supplies to safely continue nonelective treatment. This care for many of these patients cannot be delayed due to the COVID-19 response; their care must move forward on schedule in order to receive the necessary treatment for their pediatric cancer or be able to avoid facing a lifelong disability.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 relief efforts enacted to date have only provided minor assistance for children's hospitals and providers—leaving the safety net providers for our nation's children with a significant burden. Collectively, these losses for our nation's children's hospitals over the next several months may total over \$10 billion. Much of the federal funding dedicated by

Congress to provide relief for health care providers thus far has been directed through Medicare, which is not a significant program for children’s hospitals and pediatric health care providers. The first allocation of funding for hospitals from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) used Medicare revenues as the measure for assistance—virtually disqualifying children’s hospitals from receiving any aid, since the vast majority of children’s hospitals are not-for-profit, community-benefit organizations—and Medicaid, not Medicare, is the payer for more than 50% of all patient volumes. While HHS released additional funding that is not tied to Medicare, this only covered a small portion of the losses of children’s hospitals. As the safety net for children, especially those with complex medical conditions like cerebral palsy or leukemia, Congress must step up to provide dedicated funding to our children’s hospitals to address their unique situation during this time.

The needs of children, and those who provide their care, must be given special consideration as we continue to address this public health crisis. Children’s hospitals cannot sustain financial losses of this magnitude without some form of federal relief funding exclusively directed towards children’s hospitals.

We stand ready to support our country’s pediatric hospitals and providers to ensure they get the help they need. We urge you to include federal funding for our children’s hospitals as they continue to play a vital role in our nation’s fight against COVID-19 and provide the necessary care to our health system’s most vulnerable children.

We look forward to working together to protect and serve Americans of all ages during this crisis.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/ Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Doug Jones

Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Cory Gardner

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator