

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar II  
Secretary  
US Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington DC, 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Thank you for your work to provide relief to Americans during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Like many businesses, community physicians serving patients in our districts and across the country have faced a devastating impact on their practices as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. With patients having appropriately limited their trips out of the house, including to their doctor's office, along with all elective procedures being suspended for months, the impact has devastated practices and jeopardized jobs for the millions who are employed by community physician practices across the country. We write to urge that you ensure additional disbursements of CARES Act Provider Relief Fund relief are dedicated to community physicians.

A survey by the Medical Society of the State of NY found that 79% of physicians had seen a reduction of more than 50% in the volume of patients visiting their practices. Nearly 3/4 of physicians had a greater than 50% drop in practice revenue; and 40% had to lay off or furlough at least 25% of their staff. A recent Fair Health report indicating that patient visits to physician practices were down by nearly 80% in the Northeast.<sup>1</sup> Physician practices will need additional funding to remain accessible to patients in their communities given the substantial revenue losses, the extended timeframe for reopening, the ability to only operate at 50% capacity in the future because of social distancing, safety measures, and limited PPE.

Physicians are essential to the health of their communities, as well as their economic well-being. Physicians contribute to their local economies and are important employers, providing jobs to nearly 700,000 New Yorkers according to a 2018 report from the American Medical Association<sup>2</sup>. The fall-out from this crisis threatens to fundamentally alter the long-term stability of physician practices, and could lead to increased consolidation, which hurts competition and drives up costs for patients and employers.

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<sup>1</sup>FAIR Health, Healthcare Professionals and the Impact of COVID-19, A FAIR Health Brief, June 10, 2020, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media2.fairhealth.org/brief/asset/Healthcare%20Professionals%20and%20the%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20-%20A%20Comparative%20Study%20of%20Revenue%20and%20Utilization%20-%20A%20FAIR%20Health%20Brief.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>American Medical Association, Physicians Bring Economic Health to our Communities, <https://www.physicianseconomicimpact.org/>

The need is clear – our community-based physicians are important bedrocks of our communities and the nation’s economy. We urge you to do all in your power to ensure that adequate funds are allocated from the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund to help ensure the survival of community physician practices. Should you need additional resources to accomplish this, we stand ready to work with you to make that possible. Thank you for your continued work to address the COVID-19 pandemic and we look forward to continuing to work with you to serve the American people.

Sincerely,



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Anthony Brindisi  
Member of Congress



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Elise Stefanik  
Member of Congress