

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar,

We write to urge the Administration take swift action to ensure emergency funding authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security, or CARES Act (PL 116-136) is fairly distributed to all U.S. states and territories, including Wisconsin hospitals, health systems, and health care providers. We also request further information on how the administration plans to ensure that each state receives appropriate and sufficient financial support, and that no state receives an undue share of the funding allocated.

The top priority for Wisconsin's health care providers remains access to the testing supplies, ventilators, and personal protective equipment necessary to appropriately care for patients impacted by COVID-19. We recognize the ongoing efforts at the local, state, and federal levels to meet the growing need for these critical supplies and we remain committed to providing assistance in any way possible to ensure our health care providers are protected. Wisconsin has received some supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile, including a shipment received just last week, but we know the demand exceeds the supply. We appreciate the work done at all levels of government to distribute PPE and tests, and eagerly await additional supplies needed to adequately equip health care providers in our state.

Another rising concern among Wisconsin hospitals is significant revenue declines and funding shortages resulting from the cancellation or postponement of elective medical procedures in order to better respond to coronavirus. Wisconsin hospitals and health systems were quick to heed the Surgeon General's call on March 14th and CDC's March 18th guidelines on postponing non-essential elective surgeries. We applaud their leadership in taking the steps necessary to respond to COVID-19. However, we understand this action has created significant funding concerns, especially for rural and critical access hospitals in the state. Wisconsin hospitals and health systems are striving to retain essential staff in preparation for expected surges, though they no longer have the inflow of revenue to support their operations.

As you know, the CARES Act provides \$100 billion to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund under the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). This national relief fund is intended to reimburse health care providers for health care expenses or lost revenues attributable to coronavirus in the most efficient way as practicable. It is critical that the Administration take intentional steps to ensure that each state's health system receives the support necessary to treat patients now and into the future.

Too often, funding formulas have disproportionately benefitted a few states with the highest population concentrations, leaving Wisconsin short-changed. It is imperative that these dollars be judiciously administered across the country to hospitals and health systems experiencing the immediate financial burden of this national emergency – including such hospitals in Wisconsin. We ask that you make details available on how health care providers may access this funding as soon as possible. We also ask for transparency in how the funding is distributed, including any formulas, guidelines, or other methods that will ensure funding is distributed fairly to hospitals, health systems, and health care providers in all states.

Thank you for your assistance in working to ensure we can keep our health care system strong during this national emergency.

Sincerely,



Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Ron Johnson
U.S. Senator



Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



F. James Sensenbrenner Jr.
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Bryan Steil
Member of Congress