

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-222  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Republican Leader  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Capitol Building, H-230  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Democratic Leader  
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

The undersigned organizations urge Congress to include in the final “stimulus” legislation specific provisions to help physicians sustain their practices and provide their patients with the best possible care during the COVID-19 emergency. Specifically, the legislation should **support and sustain physicians and their practices during this unprecedented national emergency through tax relief, no-interest loans, direct payments, payment for virtual visits including phone calls, and other measures.**

To protect patients from exposure to the virus and conserve resources for the epidemic, physicians are heeding the call to suspend most elective in-person visits and replace them with virtual visits to the extent possible as requested by the CDC, other public health authorities, and their own professional societies.

This is putting severe financial pressure on physicians and their practices, in all types of practice and in all specialties, because most payers including Medicare pay physicians based mostly on the number of in-person visits and procedures they provide, with only limited coverage for telehealth visits. Practices are experiencing huge reductions in revenue while still having to pay rent, meet payroll, and meet other expenses without patients coming into their practices. Accordingly, we recommend that the stimulus legislation:

1. **Require all payers, including ERISA plans, to provide coverage and payment for audio-only telehealth visits with patients, at the same level as in-person visits.** While virtual telehealth visits may be covered in some cases by insurers, they typically are paid far less than in-person visits, and do not include traditional audio-only phone calls with patients, only video-enabled telehealth applications. Many patients, especially seniors, have access to phones but not video-enabled telehealth apps.
2. **Provide dedicated and direct financial support to physicians and their practices on the front lines of testing, diagnosing, and treating patients at risk of COVID-19, recognizing the increased costs they are incurring in the care of such patients.** These costs include acquiring personal protection equipment (PPE) and other supplies, even as they are experiencing reduced practice revenue. Some are even incurring the expense of temporarily relocating their residences to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
3. **Provide dedicated financial support to all physicians and their practices who are experiencing adverse economic impact on their practices from suspending elective visits and procedures.**

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**We also strongly urge that Congress take all possible actions to ensure that every physician, and every health care worker, has access to critically needed PPE.** The lack of such supplies is placing both physicians and patients at great risk of acquiring COVID-19 and spreading it to others. Eighty-nine percent of physician practices in a March 19 MGMA survey reported experiencing shortages of critical PPE. The funding that Congress has already approved must be increased, and all possible actions must be taken to increase the capacity to manufacture, acquire, and distribute PPE.

The above steps, combined with other measures to make care affordable for patients at risk of COVID-19 are essential to slowing the spread of the virus, and supporting physicians as they honor their sacred obligation to provide care to patients in need, including doing no harm to patients by eliminating elective visits and procedures to minimize patient exposure to the virus.

Sincerely,

Academy of Physicians in Clinical Research  
AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Medicine  
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Emergency Medicine  
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy  
American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery  
American Academy of Pain Medicine  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
American Association for Hand Surgery  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association of Clinical Urologists  
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American Association of Public Health Physicians  
American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology  
American College of Cardiology  
American College of Chest Physicians  
American College of Emergency Physicians  
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons  
American College of Physicians

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American College of Radiation Oncology  
American College of Radiology  
American College of Rheumatology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Epilepsy Society  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Group Association  
American Medical Women's Association  
American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery Association  
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy  
American Society for Radiation Oncology  
American Society for Surgery of the Hand  
American Society of Addiction Medicine  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery  
American Society of Dermatopathology  
American Society of Echocardiography  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Laser Medicine and Surgery  
American Society of Neuroradiology  
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Society of Retina Specialists  
American Thoracic Society  
American Urological Association  
American Vein & Lymphatic Society  
Association for Clinical Oncology  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Endocrine Society  
Heart Rhythm Society  
International College of Surgeons – United States Section  
International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery  
Medical Group Management Association  
National Association of Spine Specialists  
National Medical Association  
Outpatient Endovascular and Interventional Society  
Renal Physicians Association

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Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions  
Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons  
Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography  
Society of Critical Care Medicine  
Society of Hospital Medicine  
Society of Interventional Radiology  
Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging  
Spine Intervention Society

Medical Association of the State of Alabama  
Alaska State Medical Association  
Arizona Medical Association  
Arkansas Medical Society  
California Medical Association  
Colorado Medical Society  
Connecticut State Medical Society  
Medical Society of Delaware  
Medical Society of the District of Columbia  
Florida Medical Association Inc  
Medical Association of Georgia  
Hawaii Medical Association  
Idaho Medical Association  
Illinois State Medical Society  
Indiana State Medical Association  
Iowa Medical Society  
Kansas Medical Society  
Kentucky Medical Association  
Louisiana State Medical Society  
Maine Medical Association  
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society  
Massachusetts Medical Society  
Michigan State Medical Society  
Minnesota Medical Association  
Mississippi State Medical Association  
Missouri State Medical Association  
Montana Medical Association  
Nebraska Medical Association  
Nevada State Medical Association  
New Hampshire Medical Society  
Medical Society of New Jersey  
New Mexico Medical Society  
Medical Society of the State of New York

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North Carolina Medical Society  
North Dakota Medical Association  
Ohio State Medical Association  
Oklahoma State Medical Association  
Oregon Medical Association  
Pennsylvania Medical Society  
Rhode Island Medical Society  
South Carolina Medical Association  
South Dakota State Medical Association  
Tennessee Medical Association  
Texas Medical Association  
Utah Medical Association  
Vermont Medical Society  
Medical Society of Virginia  
Washington State Medical Association  
West Virginia State Medical Association  
Wisconsin Medical Society  
Wyoming Medical Society