



March 12, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence  
Vice President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On behalf of our member physicians, nurses, hospitals and health systems, the American Hospital Association (AHA), the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the American Medical Association (AMA) asks **the President to declare the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a disaster or emergency under the Stafford Act or the National Emergencies Act. This step is necessary to provide the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar the authority to take critical actions, such as providing Section 1135 waivers, to ensure that health care services and sufficient health care items are available to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.**

We thank Secretary Azar for his January 21, 2020 declaration of a public health emergency in the U.S. for COVID-19, which was an important first step. The Secretary's declaration provides certain flexibilities, however, more are needed to address the spreading outbreak of COVID-19. A presidential emergency or disaster declaration coupled with the Secretary Azar's declared public health emergency allows the Secretary to waive certain Medicare, Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) requirements so that hospitals, physicians, and other health care providers may share resources in a coordinated effort to care for their community. Similarly, emergency declarations were issued in the wake of Hurricane Katrina (2005), Hurricanes Ike and Gustav (2008), the North Dakota Flooding (2009 and 2010), and the H1N1 pandemic (2009 – 2010).

America's health care system must be there to help communities face an emergency from a natural disaster, a manmade disaster, or a virulent contagious disease. Our members are prepared to do our part to help patients and our communities. This requested action will provide the support we need in our collective mission to support the well-being, health and safety of patients by allowing flexibility at a time when it is needed most.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is crucial to the health of our nation. It is of utmost importance that any concerns about costs for testing and care be removed so that individuals can be screened and if necessary treated. Medicare and Medicaid programs,

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as well as commercial payers, have agreed to cover screening and treatment for COVID-19. While not part of waivers that can be implemented by HHS, we ask for federal assistance in covering costs for the uninsured, consistent with responses to several previous emergencies and natural disasters.

We look forward to working with you during this critical time to protect the health of our nation and we thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

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Richard J. Pollack  
President and CEO  
AHA

*/s/*

James L. Madara  
CEO and Executive Vice President  
AMA

*/s/*

Loressa Cole  
Enterprise CEO  
ANA