



February 27, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-222, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell:

As our nation's strategy develops to address the growing global public health threat that the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) presents to our homeland, including our nation's health, economy and social stability, we urge Congress to swiftly provide supplemental emergency funding directly and specifically to support the urgent preparedness and response needs of hospitals, health systems, physicians and nurses on the front lines of this outbreak. This supplemental emergency funding request from America's hospitals, health systems, physicians and nurses is in addition to all of the other COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts Congress is considering funding, including public health, vaccine development, military quarantining efforts, public health surveillance and testing.

Ensuring safe care for patients, protecting health care professionals providing patient care, and supporting the health and safety of communities demand the combined efforts of the public health system, front line health care providers, and federal, state and local governments. An adequately funded public health care workforce will be necessary to support a wide range of activities, including implementing quarantine, conducting testing and monitoring of patients under investigation, ensuring laboratory capacity for rapid diagnosis, and conducting public health surveillance activities to track the outbreak and inform response. All efforts must be sufficiently funded in order to be successful in preparing, responding to and controlling this infectious disease outbreak.

America's front line health care providers seek sufficient financial support for the following:

1. To quickly update, train staff on and implement pandemic preparedness plans to respond to COVID-19 in all health care settings.

2. Obtain scarce supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE), essential for protecting front line health care professionals.
3. Rapidly ramp up infection control and triage training for health care professionals in all health care settings, especially in light of growing supply chain shortages.
4. Provide housing, care and monitoring of patients who do not require hospitalization but must remain isolated to better ensure that hospital capacity is preserved for patients who require hospitalization. This includes persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections who experience mild to moderate symptoms.
5. Construction or retrofitting of separate areas to screen and treat large numbers of persons with suspected COVID-19 infections. This includes construction of isolation facilities in or around hospital emergency departments to assess potentially large numbers of persons under investigation for COVID-19 infection.
6. As the shortage of medical supplies grows, extraordinary steps to preserve PPE, including cancelling elective surgeries and other procedures, may need to occur. Such cancellations could be devastating to hospitals, physicians and nurses already at financial risk. Supporting ongoing operational costs in the face of severe supply shortages is critical to maintaining the country's ability to provide care to the most acutely ill patients during a potential COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Plan, train, and implement expanded telemedicine and telehealth capabilities to ensure that appropriate care can be provided to individuals in their homes or residential facilities when social distancing measures are used to reduce virus transmission.
8. Increase the numbers of patient care beds to provide surge capacity using temporary structures, such as temporary hospitals that are deployed in a pandemic.
9. Cover the increased costs associated with higher staffing levels, backfilling staff when necessary and special infectious disease units needed to care for patients under investigation for or with confirmed COVID-19 infection.

We are committed to maintaining a strong collaborative effort with all stakeholders to respond to the public health emergency that COVID-19 presents.

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We respectfully ask that Congress provide initial supplemental emergency funding of \$1 billion during this critical window of time when we are able to best prepare and respond to this outbreak, recognizing that additional supplemental funding may be necessary as the situation evolves. We also urge that supplemental funding not be offset by cutting other public health programs.

We greatly appreciate the leadership you have provided on ensuring our nation's ability to respond to COVID-19, and we look forward to continuing to work with you during this critical time to protect the health of our nation.

Sincerely,

/s/

Richard J. Pollack
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Hospital Association

/s/

Loressa Cole
Enterprise Chief Executive Officer
American Nurses Association

cc: The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Tom Cole