



One Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3318
☎ 703.838.0033
✉ 703.548.1890

April 8, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of AMGA and our members, I would like to thank you for the passage of three different legislative packages, including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to address the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) public health crisis. Despite this effort, the response to COVID-19 will require more solutions and resources from the healthcare industry and Congress to negate its impact on the delivery of care in this country. AMGA members remain on the front lines of screening, diagnosing, and treating the patients in their communities. Our members include more than 440 multispecialty medical groups and integrated delivery systems, which represent about 175,000 physicians who care for one in three Americans. We ask that you consider the following issues while developing future legislation, which should include both a funding and policy strategy that supports our providers as they care for patients affected by COVID-19. We ask you to address the following critical areas:

Ensure Healthcare Providers Remain Accessible for Patients

Healthcare delivery has been altered dramatically due to COVID-19. In response, AMGA members have adapted by cancelling elective surgeries and procedures as well as face-to-face visits so patients can remain safe in their homes. This remains the best course of action for patients and their communities, but the financial impact on revenues is devastating. Some members report revenue losses of almost 90%. As a result, some medical groups have only enough cash on hand to keep operating until the early summer. As a result, they are being forced to cut salaries and furlough thousands of employees, which will dramatically decrease access to the healthcare services they provide to their communities. To address this dire situation, we ask that Congress include the following policies:

Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund

We appreciate Congress' direct financial support by including \$100 billion in the CARES Act to multispecialty medical groups, integrated delivery systems, hospitals, and other healthcare providers under the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. These funds will not only support the cost of treatments for COVID-19, but also will mitigate the financial impact the virus has had on providers, whose delivery models have been upended. AMGA members face a perilous situation and require immediate assistance if they are to survive and continue to care for their communities. We ask that Congress continue to exercise oversight on the distribution of these funds to ensure that providers, including group practices, are receiving them in an efficient, effective, and timely manner. It is also very likely that this fund will be depleted in short order. We ask that Congress monitor funding obligations and replenish the fund to ensure continued provider viability.

Health Provider Loan Program

In addition to the Emergency Fund, we ask that Congress create a dedicated healthcare provider loan program. As mentioned, the fund will undoubtedly be depleted quickly and healthcare providers will need another funding mechanism that will allow them to continue to care for their communities. The loans should be low-interest loans with an extended repayment period. Moreover, these loans should be forgiven in proportion to the percentage of employees medical groups are able to retain. This forgiveness provision will act as a strong incentive to avert layoffs, which would significantly impact local communities and limit access to the care that is delivered there.

In addition to a healthcare provider loan program, medical groups with more than 500 employees should be able to access the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). As currently implemented, medical groups with more than 500 employees are not eligible for the PPP. As mentioned above, the financial impact of COVID-19 is devastating and medical groups will need several funding sources in order to keep their doors open and provide care. We understand that the PPP was designed for the hospitality sector; however, given that our medical groups are on the front line of the battle against COVID-19, the PPP should be extended to larger medical groups.

Telehealth

This public health crisis has forced providers across the nation to reevaluate the way they deliver care. The new norm for AMGA providers is to utilize telehealth technology for their patients, regardless of their COVID-19 status. This technology will allow our providers and their patients to stay safe and adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance for COVID-19 response. We ask that Congress support telehealth delivery in the following way:

Permanently Lift Obsolete Restrictions

Congress has enacted legislation to waive Medicare's geographic limitations during this national emergency through H.R. 6074, the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020. We sincerely appreciate this effort by Congress and the administration in implementing this policy, as the way we deliver health care has forever changed. This pandemic has exposed the underlying flaws in the site-of-service limitations for telehealth services and how these limitations neglect the needs of many Medicare beneficiaries. Because telehealth has become the new norm, Congress should permanently extend Medicare telehealth waivers. The significant disruption to new telehealth care delivery models and medical group

operations that would ensue if these waivers were eliminated would be devastating. It has become clear that telehealth for some Medicare beneficiaries is more convenient and, indeed, safer than going back to face-to-face visits. Congress should not force us to return to ineffective, inefficient delivery models by eliminating telehealth waivers.

Thank you for your consideration during this public health crisis. If AMGA or its members can be of service during the COVID-19 pandemic, please do not hesitate to contact Chet Speed, AMGA's chief policy officer, at 703.842-0766, or at cspeed@amga.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Penso".

Jerry Penso, M.D., M.B.A.
President and Chief Executive Officer
AMGA