

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

As Members of the New York Congressional Delegation who represent the state most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we strongly urge you to reconsider your potential decision to allocate vital funding to hospitals based on Medicare payment data that does not take into account the severe impact of the pandemic. Despite the disproportionate scale of the COVID-19 crisis in New York, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has apparently chosen not to give New York priority when distributing funding appropriated by Congress as part of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*.

As you know, the *CARES Act* included \$100 billion for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund (PHSSEF) to provide financial assistance to the hospitals and health care providers doing heroic, life-saving work during this crisis. This funding was meant to cover essential expenses for hospitals including increased staffing, expanded bed capacity, and much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE).

As you also know, New York has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic far more than any other state. According to data from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, as of today, 151,079 of the country's 432,596 confirmed cases (35%) and 6,268 of the country's 14,831 deaths (42%) have been in New York. Our hospitals have invested massive amounts of money and cancelled elective procedures in order to prepare for the surge of patients currently stretching many of their facilities beyond capacity. These important decisions will save the lives of countless New York residents, but will also put New York hospitals in a highly precarious financial situation.

Despite the disproportionate number of COVID-19 cases in New York, our understanding is that HHS may choose to allocate funding to hospitals from the PHSSEF based on Medicare payment data that does not account for the pandemic, rather than allowing for hospitals in New York and other hot spots to be prioritized. We strongly urge you to reconsider and to prioritize PHSSEF funding for New York and other states most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We look forward to your prompt response on this urgent matter.

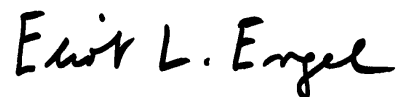
Sincerely,



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



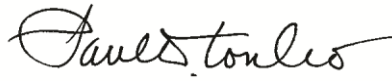
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
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Elise M. Stefanik
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