



April 6, 2020

Richard J. Pollack
President & CEO
American Hospital Association
800 10th Street, NW
Two CityCenter, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Rick:

Thank you for continuing our important conversation on how hospitals and health insurance providers can join together at this unprecedented time to work collaboratively to ensure our health care system meets the needs of all Americans throughout this crisis and beyond. The magnitude of consequences from COVID-19 is extraordinary. From the fear among our people to the suffering of those infected to the economic shockwaves, America has never faced a challenge like this.

On behalf of every health insurance provider in the country, I want to personally thank America's hospitals and the people who work inside and outside of their four walls for their service and sacrifice. Our country's doctors, nurses, hospital personnel, emergency medical services workers and public health leaders are genuine health care heroes. In the most extreme environments imaginable, and despite severe risks to themselves and their families, they are answering the call of duty. They do so because their patients and their country desperately need them. They deserve our eternal gratitude.

It is clear that hospitals are under enormous clinical and financial stress, and health insurance providers stand strong with you.

We emphatically supported emergency federal funding in Phase Three for America's hospitals and will support additional federal funding in future legislation. It is absolutely imperative that our nation's hospitals have the essential equipment and resources to care for patients infected with COVID-19. The \$100 billion in direct federal funding to hospitals should be accelerated as much as possible to relieve the financial burden many facilities are facing across the country. We also strongly support the other recent significant increases in hospital funding through higher Medicare reimbursement for COVID-19 hospitalizations, suspension of sequestration cuts, expansion of the hospital accelerated payment program, and additional delay of Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital cuts. These initial actions should be reassessed in short order to ensure that they are providing needed extra resources to America's hospitals – and if not, they should be quickly enhanced with additional federal support.

We are waiving patient costs for COVID-19 testing and treatment. No patient should have to worry about the cost of COVID-19, and the actions by so many plans across our industry have eliminated that concern. For hospitals, they guarantee patient payment with no barriers and eliminate the need to bill and collect from patients while providing peace of mind and financial security for individuals and families dealing with dire health consequences from COVID-19.

We are partnering with hospitals to accelerate the pace of patient treatment, transfers, discharges, and payments, and to eliminate administrative work. These actions will make it easier for hospitals and doctors to deliver care to COVID-infected patients, and to speed non-COVID patients to safe and available post-acute or home health settings so that in-patient providers can more effectively manage an



increasingly complex environment. Health insurance providers are also eliminating administrative work to ensure hospitals and providers can deliver care to more patients quickly and effectively. We are committed to expediting claims processing to ensure that payments are paid as quickly as possible.

We are rapidly expanding access to, and coverage for, telehealth services. By expanding telehealth – and waiving cost-sharing for telehealth services – these actions facilitate care for the many Americans who are at home and still need care. Hospital-owned physician practices can continue to see patients, and hospitals can focus their care for people who truly need it most while limiting the exposure of hospital personnel and patients to the disease.

We know there is more we can do together. A critical area of partnership is strengthening and stabilizing current health insurance coverage. The staggering surge in the loss of jobs and rise in unemployment claims clearly demonstrates this dire need—especially for the hundreds of millions of Americans who rely on employer-provided coverage. [A recent analysis by HMA](#) concluded that up to 35 million Americans could lose their employer-provided coverage, and the numbers of uninsured Americans could grow to 40 million – a level not seen since prior to implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Stabilizing current coverage is absolutely essential for businesses to continue to offer their workers affordable coverage and care, and for hospitals that rely on higher reimbursement by private-sector plans to sustain their operations.

With so many businesses at risk, more companies and more workers are struggling to afford their current coverage. Health insurance providers are working with a large number of states to give their employer customers and individual members financial flexibility and additional time to make premium payments. At the same time, many plans – particularly those covering patients in the hardest hit communities – are bracing for an extraordinary increase in costs related to treating patients with COVID-19. Some experts estimate that these costs could exceed \$250 billion to more than \$500 billion. Maintaining the necessary resources to cover these costs for the businesses, families, and individuals we serve is paramount.

When you combine unexpected costs with intense pressure from businesses, workers, and state government, there is serious and significant financial strain on many health insurance providers across the country. That's why ensuring strong, continuous coverage is so essential to everyone: patients, plans, hospitals and other providers, and businesses.

These are unprecedented circumstances for every partner in health care delivery and financing, and the financial pressures that we all face are complicated yet interconnected. We remain committed to being constructive partners so that entire health care delivery can unite to overcome this crisis. Let's continue to work together to ensure that patients get the care they need, that all care providers have the resources they need to succeed, and that we strengthen the health care system and sources of coverage we have today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Eyles".

Matthew Eyles
President and Chief Executive Officer
America's Health Insurance Plans