

April, 20, 2020

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

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Ensuring At-Risk Providers That Rely on Medicaid Promptly Receive an Appropriate Share of CARES ACT Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

Thank you for your on-going work to respond to COVID-19. We know these are complex times and appreciate your attention to addressing important health issues during this crisis. We write in support of requests by the Partnership for Medicaid (including our national organization the American Academy of Family Physicians) and by NC Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen asking you the federal government to provide prompt and proportional relief to Medicaid providers in North Carolina and across the country. We would urge you to act quickly to dedicate a portion of the \$100 billion CARES Act Provider Relief Fund to the essential providers that disproportionately serve Medicaid beneficiaries and the uninsured. Furthermore, we urge you to enlist state Medicaid programs to quickly distribute the funds proportionally to Medicaid providers in their states.

The NC Academy of Family Physicians represents 4,300 family physicians, family medicine residents and medical students across North Carolina. Over 90 percent of our members care for Medicaid patients serving 97 of our state's 100 counties, far more than any other specialty. Together with the NC Pediatric Society, we conducted a survey of primary care physicians in North Carolina over four days in late March. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported significant or extreme financial distress with that increasing to 91 percent for independently owned practices.

Medicaid providers have joined in the national response to COVID-19 and have taken on significant financial challenges due to lost revenues and increased costs. We urge the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to distribute **a proportionate amount to ALL Medicaid providers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic**. Medicaid providers are the safety net for individuals with low incomes and urgently require relief to maintain this critical role during this public health crisis and beyond. As a source of coverage for one in five Americans, Medicaid plays a key role in connecting individuals to testing and treatment for COVID-19. The federal government must do more to enhance states capacity to provide access to care through Medicaid.

We urge you to consider strategies that bring immediate, short-term relief to providers who are at high risk of closure, jeopardizing states' disaster response as well as the long-term safety net for Medicaid and the uninsured. It is important to highlight, however, that such a step, while essential, is not a permanent fix but rather a bridge to a more sustained solution. It will prevent key providers from going under imminently. With the short reprieve that such a strategy buys,

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Congress can determine how best to provide additional funding to such providers and CMS and states can continue to identify additional flexibilities under Medicaid 1115 Waivers and Disaster SPA strategies to address the situation.

Thank you for your on-going work to respond to COVID-19. We know these are complex times and appreciate your attention to addressing important health issues during this crisis. We urge you to provide family physicians, pediatricians, and other primary care professionals significant fiscal relief through Medicaid as soon as possible.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or our Executive Vice President and CEO, Gregory K. Griggs, MPA, CAE.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David A. Rinehart MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "MD" at the end being more distinct.

David A. Rinehart, MD, FAAFP
President, NC Academy of Family Physicians

cc: Gregory K. Griggs, MPA, CAE
Executive Vice President and CEO
NC Academy of Family Physicians