

March 4, 2020

Congress Reaches Deal on \$8.3 Billion Coronavirus Spending Package

Congressional leaders today reached a deal on an \$8.3 billion [spending package](#) to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The House passed the bill this afternoon, and the Senate is expected to take it up soon.

Select highlights of the package follow.

Public Health Funding for Prevention, Preparedness and Response. The bill provides \$2.2 billion to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support federal, state and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for and respond to the coronavirus. This includes \$950 million, of which \$475 million must be allocated within 30 days, to conduct public health activities, such as:

- surveillance for coronavirus;
- laboratory testing to detect positive cases;
- contact tracing to identify additional positive cases;
- infection control at the local level to prevent additional cases;
- migration in areas with person-to-person transmission to prevent additional cases; and
- other public health preparedness and response activities.

HHS Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. The bill provides more than \$3 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to develop and purchase vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, necessary medical supplies and medical surge capacity, plus an additional \$300 million in contingency funds to buy vaccines if HHS certifies that it is necessary. In addition, the bill includes funding for grants for the construction, alteration or renovation of non-federally owned facilities to improve preparedness and response capability at state and local levels.

National Institutes of Health. The bill provides \$836 million to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for research and development of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. Of that amount, \$10 million is transferred to the National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences for worker-based training to prevent and reduce exposure for hospital employees, emergency first responders and other workers on the front lines combatting the virus.

Emergency Telehealth Waiver. The bill allows the Department of Health and Human Services Secretary to waive certain Medicare telehealth restrictions during the coronavirus public health emergency. The waivers would allow Medicare providers to furnish telehealth services to Medicare patients regardless of whether the patient is in a rural community. This provision also would allow Medicare patients to receive care from physicians and other practitioners in their homes. This provision is estimated to cost \$500 million.