

May 5, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, **the American Hospital Association (AHA) urges you to extend the deadline by which providers must use their COVID-19 Provider Relief Fund (PRF) payments. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has set this deadline as June 30; however, we ask that you extend it until the end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE).**

Communities rely on America's hospitals and health systems to be there for them in times of emergency. The PRF funds have been a lifeline for hospitals and health systems and allowed them to continue to put the health and safety of patients and personnel first, and in many cases, ensured they are able to keep their doors open. While new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have slowed since the peak this winter, they are still significant. For example, approximately 50,000 new cases of COVID-19 are still occurring each day. In addition, there are still more than 35,000 hospitalized COVID-19 inpatients, on average, over the last several days.

Hospitals and health systems continue to incur expenses related to these COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, such as ensuring an adequate workforce, acquiring equipment and supplies such as personal protective equipment, pharmaceuticals and safety equipment, and maintaining testing and additional screening for every hospital patient. They absolutely should be able to apply their PRF funds toward these costs, which they will undoubtedly continue to incur beyond June 30 and through the end of the PHE.



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The AHA stands ready to work with you on this issue and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this critical issue. Please feel free to contact me or have a member of your team contact Joanna Hiatt Kim, vice president of payment policy, at jkim@aha.org.

Sincerely,

/s/

Richard J. Pollack
President and Chief Executive Officer