

July 16, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

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) writes to express strong opposition to proposals to rescind emergency funding from the Provider Relief Fund (PRF). The PRF has been a lifeline to hospitals, health systems and other health care providers to cope with the costs of providing care to patients and communities during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Diverting these funds in order to offset the costs of an infrastructure proposal while the pandemic continues and needs persist is inappropriate.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, which created the PRF, stipulated that the fund was created “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus” by reimbursing providers for “expenses or lost revenues that are attributable to coronavirus.” These funds have been critical for hospitals and health systems, and in many cases, have ensured they are able to keep their doors open. Hospitals continue to experience increased expenses and lost revenues due to the pandemic.

The COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) is very much ongoing. The virus has infected more than 33 million people and resulted in more than 607,000 deaths. While new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have slowed since the peak this winter, they are still significant. In fact, caseloads and hospitalizations are once again increasing in certain areas of the country. For example, for the week ending July 11, cases in 46 states increased week-over-week; cases in 11 of these states increased by over 50%, and three by over 100%.<sup>1</sup> Hospitalizations in 34 states increased week-over-week, with five states increasing by 40% or more.<sup>2</sup> Many areas of the country are experiencing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://graphics.reuters.com/HEALTH-CORONAVIRUS/USA-TRENDS/dgkvlgrkpb/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



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intensive care unit (ICU) occupancy rates of over 80%.<sup>3</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classifies four states as having “high” transmission of COVID-19 and another six states as having “substantial” transmission.”<sup>4</sup> Further, experts continue to warn that the more contagious delta variant combined with lower vaccination rates in certain areas of the country could spur a fall and winter surge in COVID-19 cases.

In addition, despite the ongoing pandemic and evidence provided about the continued need for additional funding, the Administration has yet to distribute remaining PRF amounts. In fact, nearly 10 months have passed since the last PRF funding opportunity for health care providers was announced (Phase 3 on October 1, 2020). This funding began going out seven months ago (December 16, 2020). Further, hospitals and health systems that were not eligible for Phase 3 have gone almost a year without any PRF funding, despite the huge surges of COVID-19 patients they treated this winter and into spring. The Administration should distribute all remaining PRF funds without any further delay, and we would ask that you reach out to the Administration and ask that they release the funds immediately. In addition, we ask that Congress oppose any efforts to recoup PRF dollars to offset unrelated spending.

Thank you for your consideration and support of our hospitals and health systems. We look forward to continuing to work with you on critical health care issues.

Sincerely,

/s/

Richard J. Pollack  
President and Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>3</sup> <https://beta.healthdata.gov/Health/COVID-19-Community-Profile-Report/gqxm-d9w9>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.