

Doctors, hospitals, nurses seek \$1 billion to combat COVID-19

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What's the news: Congress must ensure that its next COVID-19 economic stimulus package includes \$1 billion to ensure that “hospitals, health systems, physicians and nurses are viable and directly supported for preparedness and response.”

In a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the AMA, American Hospital Association (AHA) and the American Nurses Association (ANA) wrote that the emergency funds should come “during this critical window of time when we are able to best prepare and respond to this outbreak.

Why it's important: The COVID-19 pandemic has already killed more than 5,000 people around the world and there are cases in every U.S. state, with outbreaks in California, New York, Florida and elsewhere. Despite widespread social distancing measures taken to cut the spread of the infectious respiratory illness, COVID-19 is already stressing the U.S. health system and that strain will only grow more severe.

The AMA, AHA and ANA says the \$1 billion in emergency supplemental funding is essential to:

- Quickly update, train staff on and implement pandemic preparedness plans to respond to COVID-19 in all health care settings.
- Obtain scarce supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE), essential for protecting front line health care professionals and testing supplies.
- Rapidly ramp up infection control and triage training for health care professionals in all health care settings, especially in light of growing supply chain shortages.
- Provide housing, care and monitoring of patients who do not require hospitalization but must remain isolated to better ensure that hospital capacity is preserved for acutely ill patients who require hospitalization. This includes people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections who experience mild to moderate symptoms and who are not able to care for

themselves at home.

Construct or retrofit separate areas to screen and treat large numbers of persons with suspected COVID-19 infections. This includes construction of isolation facilities in or around hospital emergency departments to assess potentially large numbers of persons under investigation for COVID-19 infection.

Address the financial impacts of cancellations of elective surgeries and procedures due to shortages of PPE, other medical supplies and need to keep beds available for COVID-19 patients, as well as patient cancellations due to fear of COVID-19 in health care facilities. Such cancellations could have devastating financial implications for hospitals, physicians and nurses already at financial risk and may limit access to care.

Plan for, train on, and implement expanded telemedicine and telehealth capabilities to ensure that appropriate care can be provided to individuals in their homes or residential facilities when social distancing measures are used to reduce community spread of COVID-19.

Increase the numbers of patient care beds to provide surge capacity using temporary structures, such as temporary hospitals that are deployed in a pandemic.

Cover the increased costs associated with higher staffing levels, backfilling staff when necessary (due to unavailable staff or greater need for staff) and special infectious disease units needed to care for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Learn more: The AMA has developed a COVID-19 resource center as well as a physician's guide to COVID-19 to give doctors a comprehensive place to find the latest resources and updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization.

The AMA's COVID-19 FAQ will help physicians address patient concerns and offers advice on key issues such as how to optimize PPE supply.