

# COVID-19 economic stimulus must aid struggling physician practices

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**What's the news:** Congress must include specific provisions in the final COVID-19 economic stimulus package to ensure physicians sustain their practices and can provide their patients with the best possible care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter to congressional leaders, the AMA, American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Physicians, American College of Surgeons and Medical Group Management Association reinforced that the economic stimulus legislation should “support and sustain physicians and their practices during this unprecedented national emergency through tax relief, no-interest loans, direct payments, payment for virtual visits including phone calls, and other measures.”

The letter also strongly urged Congress to “take all possible actions to ensure that every physician, and every health care worker, has access to critically needed PPE.” The magnitude of the risk faced by physicians and patients is underscored by a March 19 MGMA survey showing that 89% of physician practices are experiencing shortages of critical PPE.

The AMA, in a March 19 letter, also outlined steps to help preserve the viability of physician practices impacted by the pandemic.

**Why it's important:** The COVID-19 emergency is “putting severe financial pressure on physicians and their practices, in all types of practice and in all specialties.” Practices are experiencing huge reductions in revenue while still having to pay rent, meet payroll, and meet other expenses without patients coming into their practices.

The letter cites three essential recommendations for the legislation:

- Require all payers, including ERISA plans, to provide coverage and payment for audio-only telehealth visits with patients, at the same level as in-person visits.

- Provide dedicated and direct financial support to physicians and their practices on the front lines of testing, diagnosing, and treating patients at risk of COVID-19, recognizing the increased costs they are incurring in the care of such patients.
- Provide dedicated financial support to all physicians and their practices who are experiencing adverse economic impact on their practices from suspending elective visits and procedures.

**Learn more:** The AMA is teaming with the essential partners in health care to reach the highest levels of government to fight for physicians and patients.

Visit the [AMA COVID-19 resource center](#) for a comprehensive place to find the latest resources and updates from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [World Health Organization](#).