

# Doctors, nurses, hospitals seek \$100 billion in next COVID relief bill

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**What's the news:** Speaking in a unified voice, doctors, nurses and hospitals are calling on Congress to provide financial relief to front-line health care providers who have incurred higher expenses for staffing and equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic, but reduced revenue due to fewer outpatient services and elective procedures.

“The number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase across the country at rates exceeding those during the Spring of 2020, and we are concerned additional COVID-19 spikes in other states in the near future will continue to stress the entire health care system,” AMA Executive Vice President and CEO James L. Madara, MD, wrote in a letter to Senate leaders.

Dr. Madara was joined in the letter by co-signers Loressa Cole and Richard J. Pollack who lead the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the American Hospital Association (AHA). They are asking that an additional \$100 billion be included in the next federal COVID-19 relief package to provide direct funding to front line health care personnel and providers—including nurses, doctors, hospitals and health systems—so they can continue their response to the pandemic.

“America’s front-line health care personnel continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic as it continues to spike in numerous states including Texas, Florida, California and Arizona,” their letter states. “The number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase across the country at rates exceeding those during the Spring of 2020, and we are concerned additional COVID-19 spikes in other states in the near future will continue to stress the entire health care system.”

**Why it's important:** Physicians, nurses, hospitals and health systems have seen huge expenses due to the pandemic. These include:

- Sourcing and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies.
- Standing up emergency operations centers.

- | Providing higher staffing levels and backfilling when necessary.
- | Providing housing and care for patients who do not require hospitalization but do not have housing in order to prevent spread of COVID-19.
- | Constructing or retrofitting facilities.

Front-line health care providers are experiencing significant financial losses. These is due to:

- | Hospitals in some communities facing a COVID-19 spike have again stopped providing nonurgent surgeries to ensure there is increased capacity for COVID-19 patients.
- | Outpatient providers continue to experience lower demand for services as patients remain in isolation.
- | Offices that are open are scheduling fewer patients due to physical-distancing precautions while incurring higher expenses for scarce PPE and other supplies.

“The entire nation is counting on hospitals and health systems, physicians and nurses to remain strong and resilient as our country battles this pandemic,” Dr. Madara and the other leaders wrote. “We ask that Congress direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to infuse these funds as soon as possible so that health care providers can continue to provide care to their patients and communities.”

The House of Representatives has already passed its own version of a “COVID 4.0” relief bill. Once the Senate passes its bill, the two sides will negotiate a final piece of legislation for both to consider before Congress departs for its August recess.

The AMA has prepared a summary of the House-approved “Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act” (HEROES Act).

**Learn more:** The three health association leaders recently joined in a similar letter to Senate leaders urging them to include provisions to strengthen the federal response for racial and ethnic minority and marginalized communities that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. A similar letter from the three CEOs was sent to HHS Secretary Alex Azar back in April.

The AMA also recently partnered with the AHA and ANA to call on the American public to protect themselves, their neighbors and families by continuing to wear masks, practice physical distancing, and to wash their hands frequently.

Stay current on the AMA’s COVID-19 advocacy efforts and track the pandemic with the AMA’s COVID-19 resource center, which offers resources from JAMA Network™, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization.

Find out about the AMA’s collaboration with the not-for-profit organization Project N95 to reserve quality-certified PPE with no minimum purchase. The deadline to submit a Customer Registration



Form is July 30 at 3 p.m. Central.