

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 6, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar:

Thank you for your agency's attention to the evolving needs of patients and families through the coronavirus pandemic. The magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic has called for an unprecedented response. It was in this view that Congress allocated \$100 billion to support the hospitals and health systems responding to disease outbreaks across the country. We appreciate your commitment to the speedy disbursement of these funds to frontline providers.

As you develop distribution rules and methodologies for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund resources, we strongly urge you to make explicit the eligibility of health care clinics provided by any self-funded group health plan sponsored by a multiemployer trust fund to apply for these funds.¹

More than 150,000 workers and their families rely on six of these employer-funded clinics for primary care services across Las Vegas alone. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these clinics have provided access to critical screening services that have helped public health agencies to manage outbreaks in Southern Nevada. It is essential that they be able to continue this important role in alleviating stress on community health centers and urgent care centers whose capacities have been stretched by the pandemic.

This support for primary care providers responding to the COVID-19 crisis is especially critical given Nevada's extreme health workforce shortage. Our state ranks 47th nationwide for active physicians and 48th for active primary care doctors per 100,000 residents.² These shortages extend to other types of providers as well – Nevada ranks 42nd among other states for Physician Assistants (PAs) with 25 PAs per 100,000 residents; just 42 Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) per 100,000 residents are registered in the state.

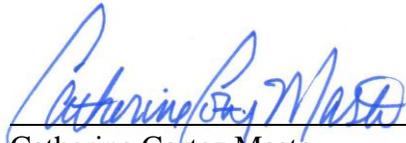
¹ Specifically, health care centers provided by group health plans sponsored by a VEBA (IRC501(c) (9)).

² Dill, M., Fisher, K., & Jones, K (2017). *2017 State Physician Workforce Data Report*. Association of American Medical Colleges. (online at https://store.aamc.org/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/30/)

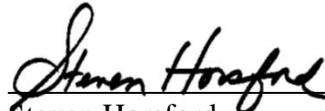
As you explore ways to stretch the capacity of our nation's health system to respond to this pandemic, we encourage you to ensure that employer-based providers caring for their workers have the support they need to continue doing so.

We appreciate your attention to this request, and your agency's partnership in our efforts to keep working families safe and healthy amidst this public health crisis.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress