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April 10, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

The American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM) is a nonprofit medical association founded to promote fair and equitable practice environments for emergency physicians. AAEM membership includes over 8,000 emergency physicians and residents across the United States who are committed to the principle that every individual should have unencumbered access to quality care provided by a specialist in emergency medicine.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency physicians and other healthcare workers across the country are dealing with huge surges of patients and high exposure to the virus, which poses significant risk to these workers and their families. Shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) have exacerbated the risk for health workers who already face hazardous conditions resulting from crowded emergency departments and close proximity to infected patients. Despite this vulnerability, our nation's healthcare professionals continue to battle COVID-19 with homemade or expired masks to fulfill their commitment to treating patients and saving lives. Such efforts undoubtedly satisfy the Department of Labor's definition of "performing hazardous duty or work involving physical hardship."

In recent days, leaders in both Congress and the Administration have expressed interest in additional compensation for these emergency workers on the frontlines of the pandemic. Temporary pay enhancements such as "pandemic premium pay," or a "Heroes Fund" to provide compensation of up to \$25,000 for essential workers have the strong support of AAEM in recognition of the incredible sacrifice of healthcare professionals during this crisis.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

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As Congress contemplates additional relief measures, we urge you to consider two additional provisions to help emergency physicians and other healthcare professionals that may be unable to work or suffer severe illness or death during the course of treating COVID-19 patients:

- (1) Enact an income protection program for emergency physicians and other healthcare professionals who become unable to perform their jobs during a period of self-isolation or infection resulting from their treatment of COVID-19 patients. Neither these workers nor their families should be asked to forego this income as a result of providing care for the very sick. This income protection program should apply retroactively from the inception of the public health emergency and remain in effect for the duration of the emergency. While Congress enacted legislation to expand sick leave, our employers can be exempted from these new requirements because they employ health care providers.
- (2) Provide funding to cover medical expenses incurred by emergency physicians and other healthcare professionals who contract COVID-19 during the course of caring for patients. These expenses should be fully covered regardless of the site of care or insurance implications, and these services should include any COVID-19 treatment furnished from the outset of the public health emergency.

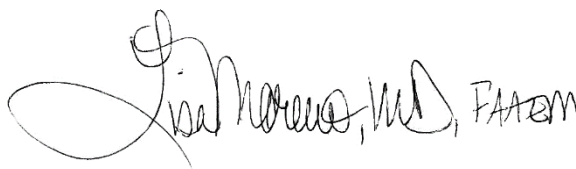
Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for funding in the CARES Act that is specifically provided to healthcare providers. We ask that for the portion of money intended to support those of us treating COVID-19 patients, that this relief be given directly to emergency physicians who are providing the care. We have communicated concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services that funds intended to support those of us on the frontlines are instead being given to administrators or contract management group managers who provide emergency department staffing services to hospitals. For future funds that may be contemplated, we urge Congress to address this diversion of resources.

As you are aware, healthcare workers are critical to our nation's efforts to defeat this pandemic but are also among the most vulnerable Americans that are responding to the crisis. We are grateful for your efforts to support us as we care for the sick and thank you for your consideration of proposals to help us continue to fight for every life and provide care for every individual regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay.

Sincerely,



David A. Farcy, MD FCCM FAAEM
President, AAEM



Lisa A. Moreno, MD MS MSCR FAAEM FIFEM
President-Elect, AAEM

cc: President Donald Trump
Vice President Mike Pence