

June 19, 2020

Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Room 5  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street Montpelier, VT 05633

**Via Email**

Dear Chair Kitchel and Senate Committee on Appropriations:

We are writing to urge you to approve the \$375 million in critical health care system stabilization funding we called for in letters to legislative leadership and testimony in the House. Now is the time for Vermont to distribute federal relief dollars to the organizations and people responsible for the health and safety of Vermonters.

We cannot restore our capacity to care for Vermonters with the approximately \$165 million currently under consideration for the health care, long-term care, dental and mental health and substance abuse systems. After accounting for direct federal relief, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health and hospice agencies, adult day centers, independent physicians, federally qualified health centers, and designated agencies and special services providers are already projecting \$413 million in lost revenue and COVID-19 related expenses through the end of December. The need will be even greater when the needs of dental practices, physician practices, residential care homes/assisted living residences and other providers come into sharper focus. Providers will continue to face increased expenses and reductions in revenue well into the future.

As you know, Vermont's rural health care system entered this crisis struggling with workforce shortages and significant financial challenges. With the onset of COVID-19, Vermont health care providers across the continuum took critical actions to reduce potential exposure for both health care workers and patients, including: cancelling elective surgeries and dental procedures, reducing in-person visits, conserving and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE), building out temporary surge spaces, creating isolation spaces, implementing telehealth and ensuring the right workforce and equipment was available to care for patients. Some had to temporarily cease services altogether or endure reduced admissions. This was the right thing to do for our patients and our staff, but these actions have had devastating financial impacts on our health care system, both immediate and long-term.

Our workforce continues to be on the front-lines day in and day out. Many of them have faced this virus head on taking care of Vermonters in hospitals, nursing homes and at home. The number of cases has diminished, but every health care worker must continue to practice arduous safety and infection prevention measures to protect patients and themselves because they can be confronted with a flare up at any time. This pandemic will continue to tax our workforce for the foreseeable future.

We urge you to advance a funding package to meet the needs of our patients, our staff and communities now and through additional waves of COVID-19 and its aftermath. Your action can ensure that we are here to continue to care for Vermonters once this crisis is over.

Sincerely,

Devon Green  
VP, Government Relations  
Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

Laura Pelosi, on behalf of  
Vermont Health Care Association  
Bayada Home Health and Hospice

Georgia J. Maheras  
Vice President of Policy & Strategy  
Bi-State Primary Care Association

Susan Ridzon  
Executive Director  
HealthFirst Independent Practice Association

Virginia Renfrew, on behalf of  
Vermont Association of Adult Day Services  
Vermont Association of Naturopathic Physicians

Jill Mazza Olson  
Executive Director  
VNAs of Vermont

Julie Tessler  
Executive Director  
Vermont Care Partners: VT Council

Jessa Barnard  
Executive Director  
Vermont Medical Society

Patrick Gallivan  
Executive Director  
Vermont State Dental Society

Stephanie Winters  
Executive Director  
Vermont Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics - Vermont  
Chapter

CC: Office of the President Pro Tempore  
Senate Majority Leader Becca Balint