

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 8, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20472

The Honorable Seema Verma, M.P.H.  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Azar, Administrator Verma, and Administrator Gaynor:

We write to strongly urge you to take all reasonable and necessary measures within your authority to ensure that all Americans who are on dialysis can continue receiving their treatments safely. Several of the largest dialysis treatment providers currently deliver dialysis services for over half a million Americans, with that number growing each year.

As you are aware, many Americans must travel outside their homes for dialysis treatment and can potentially become exposed to COVID-19 in the process. Individuals on dialysis must receive their treatments at least three times a week or they run the risk of serious medical complications, including death. As states and cities impose stay-at-home orders, public transportation options are becoming more difficult and medically risky for patients. We would encourage you to explore adding a temporary transportation benefit for End Stage Renal Disease patients during this crisis to ease this burden. These Americans simply do not have the luxury of being able to socially distance until the pandemic is over.

States hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic such as New Jersey and New York need assistance in transporting dialysis patients to treatment centers and providing those centers with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the safety of patients and the front-line workers. There are reports of dialysis centers running out of PPE and the situation will likely worsen. This lack of PPE, coupled with dialysis patients having to travel for treatment, creates a potential scenario for widespread infection in the dialysis community.

The consequences of rampant COVID-19 infection among the dialysis community are immediately apparent and serious. An additional step we would encourage you to take would be to prioritize this patient population and their care workers for COVID-19 testing in their outpatient

settings. This would reduce at least one group of vulnerable patients from overloading hospital emergency rooms and allow for quicker quarantine and treatment of diagnosed individuals.

We are aware that CMS has taken some proactive steps through 1135 waivers to assist dialysis patients. The federal government must do all it can to support the most vulnerable among us in this time of great need. We strongly urge you to provide assistance where needed and do so without delay. As we begin work on a fourth Coronavirus relief package, please let us know of any additional steps Congress can take to assist you in helping this patient population.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

Jefferson Van Drew  
Member of Congress

Andy Kim  
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress