

**CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

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By Appointment



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

May 6, 2020

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[www.chrissmith.house.gov](http://www.chrissmith.house.gov)

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
US Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Seema Verma  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
7500 Security Blvd  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

As you know, the *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act* (P.L. 116-139) appropriates an additional \$75 billion to the Provider Relief Fund—a critical lifeline for the cash-starved hospitals in my home state of New Jersey.

With the second highest prevalence rate of coronavirus in the nation, New Jersey's hospitals and medical centers are doing incredible work treating thousands of patients and saving many lives. But, because of the extraordinary number of cases, these medical centers are spending unparalleled amounts on life-saving equipment such as ventilators and PPE, creating an enormous financial strain especially since they have been forced by government to close their elective surgery units, which has resulted in huge losses.

While there are reports of some hospitals across the country preparing to open their doors to non-COVID patients, it is not expected to happen soon in New Jersey because of the continued high rate of infection and the need to see a real decrease in the number of cases in our state.

The recent announcement that \$10 billion—of the \$150 billion provided through the *CARES Act*—will now be designated for hospitals that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID infections, is welcomed news. I urge you to ensure your agencies quickly work through applications from providers and distribute the funds as soon as possible.

Similarly, regarding the newly appropriated \$75 billion in hospital aid, the federal support must go where the greatest threat and persistence of infection exists. Hospitals across the country with less occurrence of the coronavirus have faced some difficulties, and as such received support through the first tranche of funding released under the *CARES Act*. The additional \$75 billion must respond to where the greatest rate of infection and threat from COVID-19 remains.

Across the state of New Jersey, individual hospitals have already lost millions of dollars since the mandated reduction of elective and non-urgent procedures began in March. It is estimated that New Jersey's larger hospital systems have lost hundreds of millions of dollars. These losses will continue accruing, and without further infusions of cash, these hospitals risk permanent closure.

At CentraState Hospital in Freehold, New Jersey in my district, there's a sign along the road that says "Heroes Work Here"—it speaks of hospital workers up and down our state. I urge you to help these heroes continue their life-saving work long after this crisis has ended by providing payments to keep the doors of these financially damaged hospitals, open.

Thank you again for commitment to the health and safety of our country and thank you in advance for your full and fair consideration of this request. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and the last name "Smith" clearly legible.

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress