



American Academy
of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



March 22, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

On behalf of the Group of Six, which represents more than 590,000 physicians, we write to urge Congress to swiftly appropriate additional funding for COVID-19 response to ensure our patients can continue to access lifesaving vaccines and therapeutics, testing, and to ensure we are prepared for future COVID-19 variants. We are greatly appreciative that Congress has enacted major legislative packages to address this unprecedented public health crisis. While these programs have made a positive difference for physicians and their patients, funding for these vital efforts needs to continue. Specifically, the Group of Six calls on Congress to pass robust COVID Supplemental funding to continue to respond to and hopefully minimize the impact of COVID-19 on our patients. With an uptick of the COVID virus detected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in testing of U.S. wastewater¹ and the increasing prevalence of the BA.2 variant making up 23 percent of COVID cases², time is of the essence.

The members of our six organizations provide the majority of care to our nation's children, pregnant women, adults and elderly for a full range of physical, mental and substance use conditions. Each day, our physician members provide health care to patients in communities

¹ CDC confirms uptick in Covid virus found in wastewater. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-confirms-uptick-covid-19-found-wastewater-rcna20120>

² COVID Data Tracker. Monitoring Variant Proportions. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>

large and small, urban and rural, rich and poor. Our members have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, and they have played an enormous role in achieving the progress we have collectively made to combat COVID-19.

We ask that Congress pass additional funding as soon as possible before the federal government is not able to effectively respond to the on-going COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). Sustained and adequate funding is essential for the federal government and public health agencies to support the country's ongoing efforts to prevent and mitigate the harmful effects of COVID-19 on patients. Yet, without additional federal resources these critical efforts are in jeopardy of not continuing. New funding is necessary to purchase enough booster vaccines for all patients, in the event that additional boosters are authorized and recommended, particularly for elderly and immunocompromised individuals who are already at higher risk of severe disease or death from COVID-19. Resources are also needed for the development and supply of variant-specific vaccines, if needed, in the future. While anti-viral medications can greatly reduce the risk of severe illness caused by COVID-19 infection, particularly for medically vulnerable individuals, there is an acute shortage of these treatments. Our physicians report that anti-viral medications are being rationed and many of their patients unable to access them. The Biden administration recently launched its Test to Treat program to improve access but without additional funds will not be able to procure enough doses or pre-purchase new anti-viral treatments when they become available. Without adequate funding, the federal government will also not be able to obtain enough supplies of monoclonal antibody treatments and could run out as soon as late May³. In addition, the robust COVID testing capacity built up over the preceding months could start declining in June and some COVID surveillance programs may have to be discontinued if a new infusion of funding is not provided, leaving the nation unprepared for future variants and surges.

Another particularly urgent issue is that physicians will not be able to submit claims for the testing, treatment, and vaccination of their uninsured patients as soon as March 22nd, leaving some of the most vulnerable patients with limited or no access to care for COVID-19 and putting additional burden on safety net clinicians^{4 5}.

In addition, it is critical to ensure that there is a global response to the ongoing pandemic to reduce the risk of new deadly variants, including support to deploy COVID vaccines, supplies,

³ The White House Fact Sheet: Consequences of Lack of Funding for Efforts to Combat Covid-19 if Congress Does not Act. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-consequences-of-lack-of-funding-for-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-if-congress-does-not-act/>

⁴ The White House Fact Sheet: Consequences of Lack of Funding for Efforts to Combat Covid-19 if Congress Does not Act. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-consequences-of-lack-of-funding-for-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-if-congress-does-not-act/>

⁵ COVID-19 Claims Reimbursement to Health Care Providers and Facilities for Testing, Treatment, and Vaccine Administration for the Uninsured. <https://www.hrsa.gov/CovidUninsuredClaim>

and therapeutics to countries most in need. Without additional funding support to global and humanitarian aid, efforts to increase COVID vaccination across the world would falter and increase the risk of new COVID variants emerging and spreading.

We urge Congress to take the necessary and immediate steps to avoid the consequences described above. These urgent actions should include robust funding for research and development, manufacturing, and purchase of masks, vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and the supplies needed to administer those vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. As we've seen throughout this pandemic, viruses are unpredictable. Ensuring robust, real-time availability of medical countermeasures and sufficient quantities in the Strategic National Stockpile, including for children and pregnant people, is essential.

Robust Covid Supplemental funding is necessary to maintain the federal government's ongoing response to the COVID pandemic and enable us to proactively respond to the threats of future variants or surges. Without additional funding, patients will not have access to the vaccines, treatments, and testing needed to mitigate the harmful effects of COVID both in the United States and globally. We urge both the House and Senate to quickly consider and pass robust funding legislation to avoid any gap in access to these critical services for our patients and avoid any surge of COVID both here and abroad due to a lack of resources. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association