

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 26, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:


We write today to ask that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provide an immediate update on its plans to distribute the unobligated funds remaining in the Provider Relief Fund (PRF) and other health care relief programs. Over the course of the pandemic, Congress has appropriated \$178 billion for the Provider Relief Fund as well as an additional \$8.5 billion for rural providers. Hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living providers, health clinics, and other health care providers need these funds to help weather the financial difficulties created by the pandemic. In rural areas in particular, the PRF has prevented facilities that struggled before and during the pandemic from falling into bankruptcy or closing entirely.


Regrettably, the PRF funding distribution process has been uneven. Shifting guidance, difficulties in reconciling tax information, the absence of a formal appeals process, and other technical problems have plagued the program. Some providers are still waiting for funding from PRF distributions that were announced last year. Furthermore, plans for additional PRF distributions have been opaque. Financial losses occurring between the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 have not been adequately considered. In addition, some provider types, such as senior care facilities, have been underrepresented in previous rounds of funding.

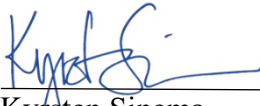
On July 19, the Government Accountability Office reported that about 25 percent of Provider Relief Fund appropriations and all of the rural provider funding remained unobligated as of May 31, 2021. GAO found that “the most current spend plans generally do not include time frames for obligating the remaining funds, which is useful information for oversight and informing future funding decisions by Congress.” GAO recommended that HHS communicate information about, and facilitate oversight of, the department’s use of COVID-19 relief funds by providing projected time frames for its planned distributions in the spend plans it submits to Congress.

We fully agree with GAO’s assessment and ask that HHS announce and implement its plans for additional disbursement of provider relief funds. As the health care provider community continues to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic, this funding should be released without any further delay. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



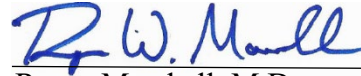
Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



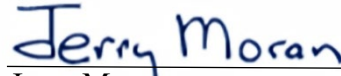
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



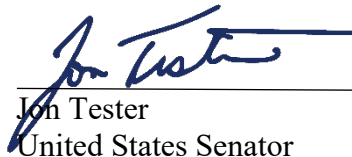
Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



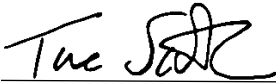
Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



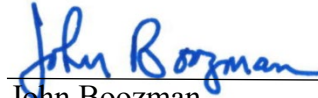
Tina Smith
United States Senator



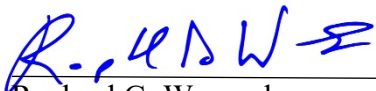
Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Maggie Hassan
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator




Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator




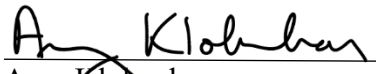
Deb Fischer
United States Senator


Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty
United States Senator

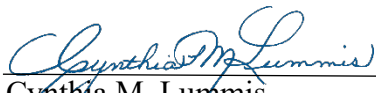

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

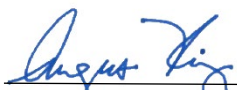

Todd Young
United States Senator


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

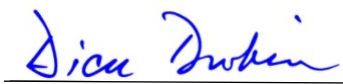

John Hoeven
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator

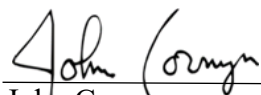

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator

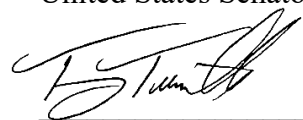

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

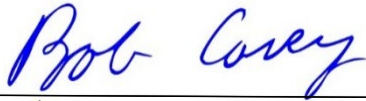

James Lankford
United States Senator


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Tommy Tuberville
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator