

## **S. 3548 – Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act – Health Provisions**

Senate Republicans and Democrats have unveiled legislation to provide emergency relief to workers, families, small businesses, and distressed industries. The full package is big, targeted, and will make a difference. **Here are the health details.**

### **Key points:**

- Gets more resources into the hands of our providers quickly
- Expands access to care for patients
- Support our public health response
- Removes limitations employers and individuals face on their HSA-eligible plans

### **What you need to know:**

- **Treatment for COVID-19 Patients is a Priority:** To help patients, the bill invests in our medical system in several ways: .
  - First, the bill provides money for providers through Medicare:
    1. Allows for accelerated Medicare payments. This will help hospitals, especially those facilities in rural and frontier areas, get the reliable and stable cash flow they need to help them maintain an adequate workforce, buy essential supplies, create additional infrastructure, and keep their doors open to care for patients.
    2. Creates a 20 percent add on payment for inpatient treatment
- Delays the sequester until the end of this calendar year, which gives providers both money and certainty
- Second, the bill provides over \$140 billion in appropriations to support our health system, including:
  1. \$100 billion for a new program to provide grants to hospitals, public entities, not-for-profit entities, and Medicare and Medicaid enrolled suppliers and institutional providers to cover unreimbursed health care related expenses or lost revenues attributable to the public health emergency resulting from the coronavirus and
  2. \$16 billion to the Strategic National Stockpile to procure personal protective equipment, ventilators, and other medical supplies for federal and state response efforts
- \$11 billion to support research and development of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to prevent or treat the effects of coronavirus
- 4. \$4.3 billion to the CDC to support federal, state, and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus
- 5. \$185 million through HRSA to support rural critical access hospitals, rural tribal health and telehealth programs
- 6. \$200 million for CMS for priorities like assisting nursing homes with infection control and support states' efforts to prevent the spread of coronavirus in nursing homes
- Finally, the bill pumps new resources into our public health, education and emergency preparedness infrastructure:
  1. Funds community health centers through November 30, 2020
  2. Reauthorizes key rural grant programs to strengthen rural community health

- Invests \$30.750 billion into a flexible Education Stabilization Fund to help states, school districts and institutions of higher education for costs face increased costs as they deal with the safety and health issues related to coronavirus as well as continue to develop plans for providing online learning for all students
- 1. Takes steps to address supply shortages, including in the Strategic National Stockpile and removing legal barriers to the production of more masks
- 2. Removes barriers to allow the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) to more easily partner with private sector on research and development and to allow BARDA to expedite diagnostics and vaccines
- **Unleashes the Full Might of America's Health Care Innovation:** The bill contains a significant expansion of telehealth by allowing patients to see doctors with whom they don't already have a relationship, connecting folks on home dialysis with providers, and allowing federally qualified health centers and rural health centers to participate.
  - The bill also expands telehealth services for home health and hospice.
  - Overburdened physicians need relief, so nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants will be able to prescribe home health services.
  - Finally, the bill makes it easier for post-acute facilities to be fully utilized during this crisis.
- **Eliminates Red Tape for Employers and Individuals:** The bill ensures that Americans are able to use all tax-favored health care accounts, like HSAs and FSAs, to buy over-the-counter medicines tax-free without a prescription. In addition, high deductible health care plans with HSAs will now be able to provide coverage pre-deductible for telehealth services.

**The Details:** The CARES Act provides unprecedented resources to providers during these unprecedented times. Moreover, patients who need care should be able to receive care, especially those seniors who need to be able to communicate with their providers in the lowest risk setting possible. Easing the rules that permit access to telehealth and increasing provider capacity would help maintain continuity of care and free up time and inpatient resources to treat coronavirus patients.