



April 16, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar,

On behalf Kidney Care Partners (KCP) – an alliance of more than 30 members of the kidney care community that serves as a forum for patient advocates, health care professionals, providers, and manufacturers to advance policies that support the provision of high quality care for individuals with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) and transplants – we want to thank you, Deputy Secretary Hargan, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the allocations from the Public Health Emergency Fund that were released on Friday. These dollars are incredibly important to physicians, dialysis facilities, and other health care providers who are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic caring for some of the most vulnerable and at-risk Americans. In addition, we would like to thank the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for the work its teams have undertaken to relax existing requirements to remove barriers to providing care to the more than 400,000 Americans living with kidney failure and those living CKD who do not require dialysis treatments.

As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized, patients with CKD, especially those with Stage 5 kidney failure, are at a heightened risk of contracting COVID-19. Thus, finding ways to promote care in the home through expanded telehealth services and extending access to laboratory testing in the home are important steps to reduce the risk of infection. In addition, allowing facilities to have the flexibility to implement programs to help patients who require in-center hemodialysis, even after diagnosed with COVID-19, has helped to ensure that all patients receive the care they need during these difficult times.

KCP applauds HHS and CMS for the distribution of emergency funds, as well as the current guidance and waivers, which have helped the community, front-line providers, patients, and their families. We will continue to try to find ways to resolve outstanding policy concerns that remain unnecessary barriers to patients accessing the care they need, while minimizing the risks associated with exposure to the coronavirus.

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We look forward to continuing to work with you and your teams as partners fighting COVID-19. Thank you again for your leadership. Please do not hesitate to reach out if there are other ways the kidney care community can assist you and other HHS officials in your efforts. Our counsel in Washington, Kathy Lester, can be reached at 202-534-1773 or klester@lesterhealthlaw.com if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Butler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Butler
Chairman

cc: Eric Hargan, Deputy Secretary