August 26, 2020

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Murphy  
United States Senator  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
United States Representative  
2413 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Larson  
United States Representative  
1501 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Courtney  
United States Representative  
2332 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Himes  
United States Representative  
1227 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jahana Hayes  
United States Representative  
1415 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Murphy and Representatives DeLauro, Larson, Courtney, Himes, and Hayes:

Our state has built a response to COVID-19 based on following the data and working in partnership with one another. This partnership has built a culture of public health accountability where mask wearing, an emphasis on testing, social distancing and reinforced good hygiene practices have depressed the COVID-19 transmission rate in our state and driven down COVID-19-related hospitalizations, which reached nearly 2,000 in late April but now stand at just under 60.

The surge in COVID-19-related hospitalizations could have very easily overwhelmed the state’s hospital infrastructure – but it did not. Instead, Connecticut’s hospitals and health systems responded, together, from a position of strength. Our hospitals expanded Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity, physically restructured themselves, deferred procedures and surgeries to preserve Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and space, and opened up COVID-19 testing sites, all while aggressively pursuing the best care for our COVID-19 patients.

The toll of this response, both on our dedicated workforce and hospital finances, has been staggering. We need your help to pass legislation that enables Connecticut’s hospitals to return to a position of strength so they can respond to a potential second wave of the pandemic.
The response of our workforce to the pandemic has been inspiring. Working around the clock, they have dedicated their lives, at great personal sacrifice, to the care and well-being of our patients. Their heroic efforts have saved thousands of lives in our state and we are pleased that their hard work and dedication are being honored by a state public health culture committed to defeating the virus.

It is clear that you understand the great financial toll that the response to COVID-19 has had on the state’s hospitals and health systems. Your support for prior legislation providing substantial financial relief to hospitals has been extremely important to sustaining our response to COVID-19 but also to supporting our commitment to the care and wellbeing of all of our patients.

As noted, our losses have been staggering – hospitals have forecasted over $2 billion in lost revenue and incremental expenses between March and September of this year. As we anticipate the fall and a potential resurgence of the virus along with our deep desire to fulfill our mission for all of our patients, we need your continued assistance. It was hospital strength that allowed us to successfully respond to the virus this spring and we need your help to rebuild that strength so that we are prepared for what may be to come.

We acknowledge that the House of Representatives has already enacted a number of these relief provisions, but we seek your collective advocacy on those provisions already adopted by the House and those that have yet to be adopted by either body.

- **Provide additional funding to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund (PHSSEF):** Hospitals and health systems have experienced staggering lost revenue and incremental expenses related to their response to COVID-19. In order to build back to a position of strength, Connecticut’s hospitals require an additional infusion of federal financial relief. We appreciate the HEROES Act including $100 billion in relief for hospitals and other health care providers and advocate that any final relief package include this level of financial assistance with the opportunity for full restoration of lost revenues relative to budget. Such provisions will best position hospitals and health systems to respond to a potential second wave from a position of financial strength.

- **Provide funding relief for pension plans:** Escalating funding obligations for hospital pension plans put hospital fiscal recovery in jeopardy. As hospitals see historic reductions in revenues, pension plan obligations have grown significantly because the interest rates used to calculate funding obligations have collapsed; pension plans are far more sensitive to declining interest rates than they are to stock market fluctuations. We encourage support of the HEROES Act provisions that will stabilize interest rates, at historical norms, and allow for a more reasonable payment timetable for pension plan obligations. Without such assistance, pension plan funding obligations will overwhelm hospital finances, jeopardizing our financial recovery and ability to care for patients.

- **Provide loan forgiveness for Medicare accelerated and advance payments:** We appreciate that the HEROES Act included considerable relief related to the timelines for the repayment of and interest rate associated with the Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payment program. While this relief is significant, we continue to advocate for the forgiveness of these payments. The forgiveness of the accelerated and advance payments will significantly improve hospitals’ ability to return to a position of fiscal strength while continuing to provide the care on which our communities depend.
• **Create a fund to provide assistance for essential workers:** As we noted, our state’s hospital workforce has delivered exceptional care for thousands of COVID-19 patients at considerable personal sacrifice. They deserve to be recognized for that service and the next federal COVID-19 federal relief package should include compensation for these heroes.

• **Establish liability protections for facilities and frontline healthcare providers treating patients amid the COVID-19 crisis:** Appropriate liability relief, acknowledging the extraordinary circumstances hospitals and clinicians have been faced with while making decisions to treat and save patient lives, should be included in the next COVID-19 legislation.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership and advocacy on behalf of our state and its response to the pandemic. Strong hospitals and health systems are critical to that response and to the general health and well-being of all Connecticut residents. Action on the aforementioned items will help the state’s hospitals remain faithful to our mission to the public’s health and our patients’ well-being.

Sincerely,

James D. Iacobellis  
Senior Vice President, Government and Regulatory Affairs

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