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29 Patient Organizations Urge Lawmakers to Take Bold, Immediate Action to Protect Those Most Vulnerable to COVID-19

WASHINGTON, D.C, March 16 – 29 organizations representing millions of patients diagnosed with serious health conditions urge the U.S. Senate to immediately pass the U.S. House-approved coronavirus bill and take additional critical steps.

In a [letter](#) to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, the organizations emphasize the importance of enacting the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201).

Public health experts warn that patients with serious, chronic conditions face heightened risk of sickness and death if infected with the novel coronavirus. For these patients, assurances that the vast majority of healthy adults will survive infection provide little comfort. It’s absolutely critical that lawmakers act with urgency to protect our nation’s most vulnerable.

H.R. 6201 contains important provisions that expand the ability of patients to get tested for COVID-19 and encourage “social distancing” that could reduce transmission. These steps include:

- Extending no-cost coronavirus testing to all patients, regardless of insurance type or status.
- Increasing federal support for Medicaid spending to ease financial strain on state budgets during this crisis.
- Providing opportunities for paid time off to allow some symptomatic workers to stay home without suffering financially.
- Suspending work requirements for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in order to facilitate social distancing and reflect economic realities during this crisis.

Separately, patient organizations urge lawmakers to quickly take these additional, vital steps in subsequent legislation:

- Ensure patients have access to COVID-19 treatment at no or low out-of-pocket costs.
- Expand the number of workers eligible for paid and protected leave during the pandemic.
- Promote health coverage through expedited Medicaid enrollment and initiate a special open enrollment period for Affordable Care Act exchange coverage.
- Expand the availability of telemedicine services for those without COVID-19 symptoms to facilitate social distancing and prevent disruption of necessary care.
- Require all health insurers to allow patients to follow CDC recommendations and obtain backup supplies of essential medicines and medical products.

Patient organizations also urge the administration to immediately repeal the block grant policy issued on January 30, 2020 which encourages states to cap their Medicaid spending. Any state that enacts these caps risks serious financial limitations that could prevent it from effectively addressing this pandemic.

Patients with chronic health conditions are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. With the number of reported infections increasingly daily, lawmakers must take these steps immediately. If they don't, the nation may lose valuable time that could have saved lives.

Adult Congenital Heart Association
 ALS Association
 American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
 American Diabetes Association
 American Kidney Fund
 American Liver Foundation
 American Lung Association
 Arthritis Foundation
 Chronic Disease Coalition
 COPD Foundation
 Epilepsy Foundation
 Family Voices
 Hemophilia Federation of America
 Immune Deficiency Foundation
 Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Lutheran Services of America
 March of Dimes
 Muscular Dystrophy Association
 National Alliance on Mental Illness
 National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
 National Health Council
 National Hemophilia Foundation
 National Multiple Sclerosis Society
 National Organization for Rare Disorders
 National Patient Advocate Foundation
 National Psoriasis Foundation
 Susan G. Komen
 United Way Worldwide
 WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

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