

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 7, 2020

Alex M. Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

We write to request that you consider reopening and adjusting eligibility for the most recent round of high-impact payments provided through the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund to account for states that saw surges in hospitalizations in late June and July. Further, in additional funding rounds, we request you take into consideration circumstances outside of admissions per day to ensure our frontline workers can continue to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving pandemic. As Arkansas's hospitalizations surged in recent weeks, providers heeded the call and worked collaboratively so no one hospital was overwhelmed. This, coupled with the surge in hospitalizations falling just outside the eligibility date for the most recent round of high-impact payments, has left hospitals in parts of Arkansas ineligible for this crucial funding.

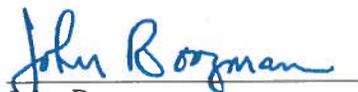
The Northwest Arkansas region illustrates the need to continue to evaluate surge areas and high-impact areas for additional funding through the Provider Relief Fund. Major hospital systems in Northwest Arkansas coordinated early on in the pandemic to prepare for any future surges in inpatients, but the burden has been substantial.

The first case of COVID-19 admitted to an Arkansas hospital was on March 11<sup>th</sup>, and only a few days later, hospital systems in Northwest Arkansas and throughout the Natural State began to execute a collaborative response with resource sharing and a balancing strategy. Arkansas's largest surge of patients came after June 10<sup>th</sup>, the most recent deadline for the high-impact payments. From June 11<sup>th</sup> through July 20<sup>th</sup>, 484 new COVID-19 positive patients were admitted to just three hospitals in Northwest Arkansas, and the total inpatient volume for that region of the state was 690 patients, a 200% growth during that time. The efforts put in place by these hospitals helped to ensure no hospital was overrun, but the strain on resources remains. Without the measures taken early on, the surge Arkansas has seen over the past many weeks may have resulted in dire outcomes. These actions did not come without their costs though.

We strongly urge you to take into account states that saw surges in patients in late June and July when determining distribution of payments for high-impact areas. Congress and the Administration acted swiftly to allocate resources as quickly as possible, and as this pandemic continues to change and impact different parts of this country, it is imperative that our policies remain flexible in order to allow the vast resources provided to continue to make the most impact.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John Boozman  
U.S. Senator



Tom Cotton  
U.S. Senator



Steve Womack  
Member of Congress



French Hill  
Member of Congress



Rick Crawford  
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman  
Member of Congress