

## ***Supporting Texas Health Care Providers and Hospitals Through the Coronavirus Pandemic***

Senator Cornyn has been working to provide support for hospitals, community health centers, and other health care providers combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. After extensive conversations with Texas hospital systems, frontline providers, and state and local health authorities, Sen. Cornyn successfully delivered significant resources to health care providers while reducing unnecessary barriers to care for Texans.

### **EQUIPPING HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO RESPOND TO COVID-19:**

*In order to respond to the coronavirus, Sen. Cornyn voted for legislation to equip those on the front lines with the resources they need to provide care for Texans. To aid all Texas health care institutions, from hospitals to Community Health Centers to state and local entities, the three coronavirus relief bills passed:*

- **Increase the supply of drugs and equipment**, including ventilators and masks
- **Increase hiring** for vital health care jobs
- Speed up the **development of a vaccine, treatments, and faster diagnostics**
- Provide **\$1.3 billion in immediate additional funding for Community Health Centers** on the front lines of testing and treating patients
- **Aid the health care industry's response to the pandemic** by providing:
  - \$100 billion for hospitals to handle an influx of coronavirus patients
  - \$11 billion for vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and other medical needs
- **Inject targeted funding** to state and local entities, including:
  - \$150 billion for state and local governments, allotted based on population (any city or county with more than 500,000 residents can petition the U.S. Treasury directly for funding, otherwise smaller local entities may receive funding allotted to the state)

- \$272 billion in targeted funding for state and local assistance, including:
  - Hospitals and health care workers
  - The purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment
  - Scientists researching treatments and vaccines
  - State, local, and tribal governments
  - Small businesses struggling to pay their employees
- Secure **\$35 million to reimburse state and local governments** for care provided to coronavirus patients evacuated from cruise ships
- **Empower nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants** to be able to prescribe home health services

#### **PRIORITIZING RURAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS:**

*Because millions of Texans live in rural areas, Sen. Cornyn helped pass legislation that prioritizes the unique needs of rural health care providers, including:*

- Providing **\$25 million in funding for distance learning telemedicine and broadband** to support rural communities' access to health and education resources
- **Reauthorizing Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant programs** that strengthen rural community health by focusing on quality improvement, increasing health care access, coordination of care, and integration of services
- **Allowing Rural Health Centers to utilize telehealth to serve patients**

**REMOVING BARRIERS TO CARE:**

*In response to this unprecedented pandemic, Sen. Cornyn helped pass legislation that reduces barriers for Texans who need coronavirus treatment and testing and that eliminates unnecessary red tape for hospitals, doctors, and other health care providers. This legislation:*

- Makes **all COVID-19 tests free** for all Texans
- **Requires private insurance plans to cover** COVID-19 treatments and vaccines
- Temporarily **allows up to 3-month fills and refills of covered Medicare Part D prescription medications** if requested by a beneficiary
- Allows the **use of HSAs to cover telehealth and over-the-counter drugs and medical products**, including those needed for quarantine and social distancing, without a prescription
- Temporarily **lifts the Medicare sequester** from May 1 - December 31, 2020, boosting payments for hospital, physician, nursing home, and home health
- **Increases Medicare reimbursements made to a hospital** for treating a patient admitted with COVID-19 **by 20 percent**
- Temporarily **expands an existing Medicare accelerated payment program that allows qualified facilities to request up to a six-month advanced lump sum or periodic payment** to ensure hospitals, especially those facilities in rural and frontier areas, have a reliable and stable cash flow to help them maintain an adequate workforce, buy essential supplies, create additional infrastructure, and keep their doors open
  - Advanced payment would be based on net reimbursement represented by unbilled discharges or unpaid bills
  - Most hospital types could elect to receive up to 100 percent of the prior period payments, with Critical Access Hospitals able to receive up to 125 percent
  - Qualifying hospitals would not be required to start paying down the loan for four months and would also have at least 12 months to complete repayment without a requirement to pay interest

- Taking care of servicemembers and veterans with **\$82 million for COVID-19 related expenses for military personnel and Department of Defense employees and \$60 million for veterans' related medical services**
- **Provides acute care hospitals temporary flexibility** to transfer patients out of their facilities and into alternative care settings in order to prioritize resources needed to treat COVID-19 cases
- **Provides home and community-based support services during hospital stays** by allowing state Medicaid programs to pay for direct support professionals trained to help with activities of daily living to assist disabled individuals in the hospital in order to reduce length of stay and free up beds
- **Waives the Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility (IRF) three-hour rule** that requires a beneficiary be expected to participate in at least three hours of intensive rehabilitation at least five days per week to be admitted to an IRF
- **Allows a Long Term Care Hospital (LTCH) to maintain its designation** even if more than 50 percent of its cases are less intensive
- **Clarifies that doctors who provide volunteer medical services during the pandemic have liability protections**

#### **SUPPORTING MEDICAL PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS:**

*During the pandemic, Texas companies who manufacture respirators, masks, and other health care-related products should be supported for the lifesaving role they play in fighting the coronavirus. Sen. Cornyn voted for legislative provisions that:*

- **Provide permanent liability protection for manufacturers of personal respiratory protective equipment**, such as masks and respirators, in the event of a public health emergency, to incentivize production and distribution
- **Dedicate \$16 billion for the Strategic National Stockpile** to procure personal protective equipment, ventilators, and other necessary medical supplies for federal and state response efforts

**PROMOTING TELEHEALTH:**

*Telehealth allows Texans to see doctors from the safety of their own homes, protecting both the patient and the provider. Sen. Cornyn worked to pass legislation that:*

- **Allows a high-deductible health plan (HDHP) with a health savings account (HSA) to cover telehealth services prior to a patient reaching the deductible**, increasing access for patients who may have the COVID-19 virus and protecting other patients from potential exposure
- **Enables Medicare beneficiaries to access telehealth from a broader range of providers** by eliminating a requirement that the physician must have treated the patient in the past three years
- **Expands Medicare telehealth for home dialysis patients** by temporarily eliminating a requirement that a nephrologist conduct some of the required periodic evaluations of a patient on home dialysis face-to-face, allowing Texans to get more care in the safety of their home

Please reach out to Senator Cornyn's office with questions about any of these provisions.

**Visit [cornyn.senate.gov/coronavirus](https://cornyn.senate.gov/coronavirus)** for more information on Senator Cornyn's efforts to combat the coronavirus