

MEMO

December 3, 2020

TO: Missouri Congressional Delegation Health Staff and District Staff

FROM: Daniel Landon
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SUBJECT: Congressional Support for New Missouri Hospital Staffing Initiative — ACTION REQUESTED

On Wednesday, December 2, Governor Mike Parson unveiled a new partnership between Missouri state government, hospitals and Vizient, a national health care performance improvement company. The initiative will provide for the deployment of up to 760 health care workers in Missouri hospitals, allowing those hospitals to expand their bed capacity to respond to the overwhelming surge in COVID-19 patients. The added non-Missouri staff from Vizient's contracted agencies will allow as many as 600 new hospital beds to be brought into action in Missouri. The new capacity will be distributed throughout the state.

Funding for the initial weeks of the 12-week partnership agreement will be provided from Missouri's allotment of federal Coronavirus Relief Funds from the CARES Act. However, the CARES Act only allows those funds to be spent on costs incurred through December 31, 2020. Missouri has Coronavirus Relief Funds that could be used to support the partnership into 2021 if the federal spending deadline were extended to permit it.

On behalf of its member hospitals, the Missouri Hospital Association urges the Missouri congressional delegation to press for a legislative enactment this month to extend the December 31, 2020, deadline for state, county and tribal governments to spend their current allotments of Coronavirus Relief Funds. MHA appreciates Senator Roy Blunt and Senator Josh Hawley's collaboration and leadership on this topic. S. 4898 sponsored by Senator Lisa Murkowski, would extend the deadline to September 30, 2021. Its bipartisan cosponsors include Senator Blunt. A similar bill in the House of Representatives, H.R. 7854, is sponsored by Representative Glenn Thompson.

Without congressional action, Missouri will be barred from using its distributed allotment of Coronavirus Relief Funds to support this urgently needed infusion of registered nurses, respiratory therapists and certified nurse assistants to staff more hospital beds. Instead, the funding obligation will fall to the hospitals themselves as the worst of the pandemic cascades into 2021.

MHA and its members deeply appreciate the COVID-19 financial and other assistance Congress has provided in 2020. It has been invaluable. Unfortunately, the virus is blind to calendars and funding deadlines. It is exploding as 2020 winds down. We hope the entire Missouri delegation can support the effort to extend this state government spending deadline into 2021.

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