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May 18, 2020

The Honorable Mike Parson  
Governor of Missouri  
Missouri State Capitol  
201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 216  
Jefferson City, MO 65101-1556

Dear Governor Parson:

As we enter week three of implementation of the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan, we appreciate your continued leadership in managing the various issues for a smooth and safe transition to reopening our state's economy. You and your team's attention to all details related to the issues involved in this effort continues to show positive and important results.

As previously shared, we are grateful for the many waivers the state has issued to help all parts of our state respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Many of these are set to expire on June 15, when the state's medical emergency declaration expires. In the next few weeks, we intend to share with you which of these waivers — particularly those that relate to how hospitals are engaging both with COVID-19 positive patients and patients under investigation — should be permitted to expire, those that should continue for a defined length of time and those that should move to permanent status. In the meantime, we want to call your attention to an emerging issue that has not been addressed through waivers, but one we believe needs to be considered during these upcoming transitions in mid-June.

Many of the health insurers across the country acted quickly to modify their policies such as testing, preauthorization and telehealth services to give both health care providers and patients a new set of tools to combat the virus. Like the upcoming state decision on its waivers, insurance carriers also will be making decisions on policy changes. There will be many individual company decisions on whether to extend, modify or halt coverage. One decision that should be universal in its continuance would be to maintain coverage for testing for COVID-19.

As we all know, this battle against the coronavirus will continue until the general population has immunity and a vaccine is found and fully deployed. As we transition from our work to build capacity to one of mitigation, testing will be the linchpin that will permit all of us to live and conduct business in this new environment. Testing will permit ongoing monitoring and identification of cases, better movement toward treatment and isolation to prevent spread. Testing also helps in the identification of anyone who encountered those who are infected, permitting their rapid movement to treatment as well. Finally, testing supports the larger public health picture, helping us understand the prevalence, spread and contagious nature of the disease.

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COVID-19 testing should become a benefit like the many other wellness benefits that are offered to insured individuals across the state and country. Over the past decade, the efforts to target prevention and promote healthy behavioral changes, such as health screenings, expanded immunizations and testing for diabetes and other chronic diseases, have led to reductions in medical costs and absenteeism from work. Those benefits should be the same if not greater for COVID-19 testing for all individuals, particularly if testing is permitted to continue for those who are asymptomatic, those who have had potential exposure, pre-surgical evaluation and evaluation for return to work.

As you know, the General Assembly has sent you legislation that bars health insurers from reducing coverage of COVID-19 testing during a state of emergency declared by the Governor. House Bill 1682 has an emergency clause for this particular section of law, and we urge you to sign the bill as soon as possible. As noted, Missouri's hospitals believe the need for testing will extend beyond the expiration of the declared emergency.

A key component for the success of the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan is the ability to contain and reduce the spread of the virus in Missouri. If we cannot do that, the unselfish sacrifice of so many individuals and businesses will have been lost. We look forward to working with you, insurance companies and others to help design ongoing policies that will permit all of us to both live and thrive until a vaccine is found.

Thank you for the leadership you and your administration have provided during this public health emergency.

Sincerely,



Herb B. Kuhn  
President and CEO

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