



August 5, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write to thank you for the recent extension of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) and to encourage you to renew it again before it expires in October.

The AAMC is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members comprise all 156 accredited U.S. and 14 accredited Canadian medical schools; approximately 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and nearly 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and the millions of individuals across academic medicine, including more than 191,000 full-time faculty members, 95,000 medical students, 149,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Following a 2022 merger, the Alliance of Academic Health Centers and the Alliance of Academic Health Centers International broadened the AAMC's U.S. membership and expanded its reach to international academic health centers. Learn more at [aamc.org](http://aamc.org).

The AAMC commends the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for its continued support of our member teaching hospitals, health systems, faculty physician practices, and other health care providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The waivers, flexibilities, and policies allowed during the COVID-19 public health PHE have equipped the nation's medical schools and teaching hospitals with many necessary tools to manage this prolonged pandemic and continue to deliver care to their patients and communities. However, the pandemic is not yet over, and our members continue to face challenges as they respond not only to new COVID-19 variants, but also other emerging public health crises; staffing shortages; unprecedented violence against health care workers; and increased financial strain. Continuing the emergency declaration is a crucial part of ensuring our hospitals, physicians, and health care providers can combat the next stage of the pandemic and respond to other ongoing challenges.

Throughout the pandemic, despite myriad challenges, our member teaching hospitals, health systems, medical schools, faculty physicians, and other health care providers have mobilized on all fronts to contain, mitigate, and respond to COVID-19. The waivers and flexibilities implemented using PHE authority provided our members with critical resources and tools not

only to deliver quality effective care, but also to create and advance new health care delivery systems and innovative models of care.

Telehealth in particular has seen a critical transformation, with waivers that expanded access to care by removing the geographic barriers surrounding telehealth, allowing providers the flexibility to continue to provide audio-only telehealth, among other key improvements. Another critical waiver tied to the PHE enabled many of our members to implement Acute Hospital Care at Home programs and expand their care capacity beyond their existing walls, while also mitigating COVID-19's spread.

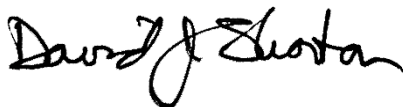
Additionally, millions of low-income Americans have been assured access to reliable Medicaid coverage due to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act's continuous enrollment requirement and its 6.2% increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). In the absence of PHE authority, states must resume the process of redetermining beneficiaries' eligibility for the program, which may result in the inappropriate loss of coverage for many otherwise eligible individuals. Ending the PHE prematurely will end the essential waivers and flexibilities that have expanded access to coverage and care, especially for communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

With rising breakthrough cases, hospitalizations, and deaths due to the B.A.5 variant, probable COVID-19 surges in the fall, and a potentially difficult flu season, it is imperative to renew the PHE in October. Removing these waivers and flexibilities would eliminate a critical lifeline and could prove to be detrimental to an already exhausted and depleted health workforce, exacerbate provider shortages, and create further disruptions to patient care. A longer transition period and meaningful discussion among stakeholders are necessary to ensure a smooth transition to a post-PHE health care environment.

We urge you to extend the COVID-19 PHE and allow our hospitals and health care providers to utilize all the tools needed to combat and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration and prompt attention to this urgent matter. We welcome the opportunity to provide any additional information. If you have further questions please contact Tannaz Rasouli, Acting Chief Public Policy Officer, at [trasouli@aamc.org](mailto:trasouli@aamc.org).

Sincerely,



David J. Skorton, M.D.  
President and CEO  
Association of American Medical Colleges