



December 1, 2020

The Honorable Ron Johnson  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bryan Steil  
1408 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Pocan  
1421 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Kind  
1502 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gwen Moore  
2252 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner  
2449 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn Grothman  
1217 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Tiffany  
1714 Longworth House Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Gallagher  
1007 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Delegation:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership as we navigate such unprecedented times. I greatly appreciate your attention to the impact this pandemic is having on Children's Wisconsin (Children's) and the patients and families we serve. As you know, Wisconsin is currently experiencing extraordinarily high rates of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths. We urge you to work together to pass legislation this month to address the serious impact COVID-19 is having on our communities. Specifically, I ask for your support for inclusion of policies to protect coverage of and care for children; to address the significant mental health and well-being needs of Wisconsin children and families; to slow the spread of the virus; and to provide resources for our communities and schools.

As the only independent health care system in the state dedicated solely to kids, Children's takes seriously our promise to provide high-quality care to ensure children can grow up to be their healthiest and best self. We urge you to protect the structures and supports critical to providing coverage and care to children, particularly the Medicaid program. Medicaid is the largest health insurer for America's kids. At Children's, approximately 50% of our patients are covered by Medicaid. It is crucial that funding for Medicaid be protected and, as necessary, enhanced to allow states and providers the ability to deliver care and manage the increased enrollment, demands and unprecedented operational challenges resulting from the pandemic. We appreciate the increase in the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP) that was provided in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and urge your support to enhance this support for states going forward.

In addition, we specifically ask for your support for enactment of a policy related to the Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) Payment Program that was recommended by the Medicaid and

CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC). This would change the definition of “Medicaid shortfall” in statute to exclude consideration of costs and payments for all Medicaid-eligible patients for whom Medicaid is not the primary payer. This is an important issue for children’s hospitals because we see significant volumes of children who have commercial insurance but, because of their underlying medical condition, may have Medicaid as an appropriate and crucial secondary payer. This language recommendation would ensure that hospitals, such as children’s hospitals, that care for high volumes of Medicaid patients would continue to be eligible for DSH which is especially critical during these challenging times to protect patient access to care and minimize care disruptions.

Children’s strongly supports efforts to address health inequities and to provide families with the support and resources they need to manage through this crisis. COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on communities of color has further highlighted the health disparities that exist in our communities. We know that social factors, like access to safe housing and food security, have a profound impact on one’s health. We urge you to prioritize additional resources to current programs that target support to at-risk populations and communities.

While the pandemic has naturally focused our attention on physical health care needs, at Children’s we are extremely concerned about the impact the pandemic is having on children’s behavioral and emotional health. We encourage direct funding for mental and behavioral health care (MBH) for children and youth in the next relief package. Our patients with MBH concerns need us now, more than ever, and we are seeing many new patients who are seeking care. Unfortunately, we are seeing a greater percentage (by total volume) of children and adolescents coming to the emergency department for self-harm injuries, including patients with repeated visits within the month of their last visit. We believe much of this increase is due to COVID-19-related anxiety and stress. One of Children’s top priorities prior to the pandemic was expanding our MBH services and we have been working to reach children in new ways to respond to the increased demand for care. This includes making use of telehealth, including via audio-only, to expand access to care. It’s critical that Congress prioritize strengthening our behavioral health system and provide targeted funding for pediatric MBH services, including funding to expand the workforce, support school-based services, deploy new innovative ways for children to access services, as well as making permanent waivers that facilitate audio-only MBH telehealth services.

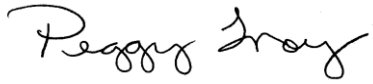
Children’s also strongly urges additional resources be provided to states and communities, including our schools. These resources should be aimed at slowing the spread of the virus, including funding for personal protective equipment for key essential workers and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, expanding and sustaining COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, as well as ensuring a timely and effective deployment of the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available. We also urge Congress to prioritize funding to schools so they have the necessary resources to operate both virtually and safely in-person. It’s critical that we are prioritizing the health and well-being of our nation’s children, especially during this trying time, and that includes making sure their educational and social, emotional and mental health needs are met. Making sure school districts and schools have robust resources in place is a vital step to not only helping kids and families learn and thrive, but also critical for our communities to move forward.

Lastly, and importantly, we ask that you continue to amplify our joint effort with health care systems across the state to spread messages to help our community stay safe, combat this virus and help our health care workers by: wearing a mask, washing our hands, watching our distance and getting a flu

shot. It's critical we come together to address the urgent needs of our state during this public health crisis.

Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of Children's and the kids and families we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Troy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peggy Troy  
President & CEO  
Children's Wisconsin