



July 17, 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 during these past months 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 Congress advances legislation to address the serious impact COVID-19 has on our communities, I ask for your support for inclusion of policies to protect coverage and care of children and to address the significant mental health and well-being needs of the children and families we serve.

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 children. 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 demands and unprecedented operational challenges resulting from the current 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 extend or enhance this support to 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. 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 payor. 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.

In addition to ensuring a stable Medicaid program for our children and families in Wisconsin, it's also important to ensure they can access comprehensive commercial coverage during this public health emergency. We encourage the creation of a federal Special Enrollment Period for marketplace coverage in order to ensure that all consumers can access health insurance due to unforeseen circumstances or other hardships.

While the pandemic has naturally focused 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. It's critical that Congress prioritize strengthening our behavioral health system to address the urgent MBH needs of our children so they can access the care and support they need to be positioned to thrive in the future.

Children's strongly supports efforts to make permanent many of the waivers authorized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that allowed for the rapid expansion of telehealth. Since the pandemic began, Children's has been working especially hard to prioritize offering telehealth visits for our patients. In the nine months preceding March, we completed approximately 600 virtual visits for our patients. Since mid-March, we completed over 30,000 virtual visits. This includes more than 10,000 visits for MBH services. These waivers, particularly expanding allowable originating site locations and use of audio-only telehealth for MBH, are extremely beneficial in allowing us to expand access to care for our patients and we believe their value will continue to be essential to ensuring patients and families get the care they need.

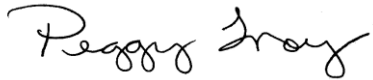
Additionally, COVID-19's disproportionate impact on communities of color has further highlighted the health disparities that exist in our communities. We strongly support efforts to address health inequities and to provide families with the support and resources they need to manage through this crisis. Additionally, we know that social factors, like access to safe housing and food security, have a profound impact on one's health. We need to prioritize cross-sector investment to address the structures and systems involved in perpetuating inequities that exist in our communities. Kids cannot be healthy if their community is not healthy.

Lastly, we greatly appreciate your efforts through both public and private partnerships to ensure health care providers in the state have the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep our workforce and patients safe during the public health emergency. Unfortunately, we continue to face unstable supply chains creating uncertainties in our ability to procure the necessary medical grade PPE

and supplies. As we head into the fall viral season, we ask for your continued support in helping health care providers obtain the PPE we need to protect our patients and our staff. We also believe that funding for communities to provide cloth masks and hand sanitizers to residents, especially for vulnerable community members, is essential to slow the spread of the virus.

We appreciate your attention to these important issues. Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of Children's and the kids and families we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Troy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Peggy Troy
President & CEO