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April 8, 2020

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from the NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: [massmed.org/covid-19](https://massmed.org/covid-19).

As a reminder, physicians may continue to email questions to the MMS for assistance. For information on developments related to the COVID-19 response and resources available from the state and federal agencies, send questions to [dph@mms.org](mailto:dph@mms.org). For assistance with practice management and sustainability, telemedicine, and payer relations, send questions to [pprc@mms.org](mailto:pprc@mms.org).

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## Educational Resources

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### MMS Virtual Member Forum – Tuesday, April 14 at 7:30 p.m.

MMS president, Dr. Maryanne C. Bombaugh, along with president-elect, Dr. David Rosman, and vice-president, Dr. Carole Allen, will host a virtual forum for MMS members next Tuesday, April 14 from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Dr. Bombaugh will provide a brief update on MMS activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and MMS staff will report on pertinent developments with the BORIM, on professional liability, and government support for the health care industry, as well as provide information about telehealth and practice sustainability tools and resources. The forum will be hosted via the [Zoom webinar platform](#), and all MMS members will be invited to participate. Please mark your calendar. Meeting participation instructions will follow.

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## Practice Management

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### UnitedHealth Group accelerates nearly \$2 billion in payments and support to health care providers

UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), through UnitedHealthcare and Optum, has announced it is taking steps immediately to accelerate payments and other financial support to health care providers in the U.S. to help address the short-term financial pressure caused by the COVID-19 emergency. “We are grateful to the health care providers and their teams who are on the front lines battling COVID-19,” said UnitedHealth Group Chief Executive Officer David S. Wichmann. “The actions we are taking today will provide nearly \$2 billion in accelerated payments and financial support so our care provider partners can focus on delivering needed care.” To read more, [click here](#).

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## Government Guidelines

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### Baker announces financial relief package for health care providers

On April 7, Gov. Baker [announced](#) an \$800 million financial relief package to support health care providers through the MassHealth program. This aid package is an acknowledgment that in stepping up to address the COVID-19 crisis, many health care providers are experiencing a significant impact on their revenue and operations, straining the financial stability and sustainability of many physician practices.

This funding will support hospitals and various providers, including primary care providers and private physician practices, and will be distributed beginning this month through July. More than \$300 million will be allocated to health care providers delivering medical care for COVID-19 or providing services that keep residents safe in their homes and out of the hospital, including physicians, community health centers, personal care attendants, etc. The Medical Society continues to monitor forthcoming administrative bulletins providing further detail on how these funds will be disbursed.

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## MMS urges support for liability legislation

Today Governor Baker [filed](#) legislation, *S.2630, An Act to Provide Liability Protections for Health Care Workers and facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, providing civil immunity for health care providers and facilities providing medical care during the COVID-19 public health emergency, absent gross negligence or other reckless or willful misconduct. This legislation comes on the heels of advocacy by MMS calling for enhanced liability protections to supplement existing state and federal liability protections for volunteers responding to this pandemic, which do not apply to most paid physicians.

The COVID-19 crisis has created extreme circumstances requiring physicians to make challenging and painful decisions about how to allocate limited and potentially life-saving resources. The physician community is concerned about increased liability exposure for providing care under such dire circumstances and should be provided the flexibility to continue to provide the best care possible for patients and to protect the public health. The Medical Society will be putting out a call to action for all members to contact their state representatives and senators and urge passage of this critical legislation.

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## Advocating for the financial sustainability of our practices

On April 7, the Massachusetts Medical Society—along with the American Medical Association and organizations representing hundreds of thousands of health care providers—[sent a letter](#) to the US Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Alex Azar. The letter urges HHS to provide immediate financial relief to our providers using the \$100 billion designated in the recent CARES Act. Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) are the recommended vehicle to disburse the funds quickly. MMS also sent the letter to the Massachusetts congressional delegation, requesting they continue to support the financial sustainability of our practices. MMS will continue advocating for financial relief for our practices as future federal proposals are developed.

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