

March 30, 2020

Brian Pieninck, CEO
Carefirst Blue Cross Blue Shield
1501 S Clinton St, Baltimore, MD 21224

Dear Mr. Pieninck,

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in the State write to you today to request specific relief from CareFirst for the physician community, specifically the independent community practices as they struggle to stay economically viable.

Not only are community-based practices addressing COVID-19, they are doing their best to continue both sick and well care for children and adolescents including critical vaccination services that will prevent other outbreaks during this vulnerable time. While these practices have worked to quickly pivot to a mostly virtually visit platform with the institution of new payment models for telehealth and virtual visits, these new platforms do not relieve the very real financial challenges faced by these practices.

Physician practices need to be open and have staff available to do vaccinations and provide other essential services through the duration of this crisis or our hospitals will truly be overwhelmed. Absent additional economic relief, these financial challenges are threatening their ability to continue to maintain their operations through this crisis

To that end, MedChi is requesting that CareFirst provide financial assistance to Maryland physicians in a manner analogous to the relief provided by the federal government through Medicare. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has expanded their Accelerated and Advance Payment Program to a broader group of Medicare providers for the duration of the public health emergency to help ensure that Medicare providers have the resources they need to maintain their focus on patient care (CMS fact sheet attached).

Unfortunately, many of Maryland's primary care physicians, specifically the pediatric and adolescent medicine community, serve very few if any Medicare patients. Consequently, these practices will not receive any relief as a result of the federal action. These practices do however serve significant percentage of CareFirst's enrollees and request that CareFirst provide similar advance payment relief and other financial supports such as prepayment of primary care bonuses. MedChi welcomes the opportunity to work with CareFirst to implement the requested relief and are available to provide further information on the challenges currently faced by Maryland's community based physicians as they work to address COVID-19 while maintaining access to other important health care services.

Sincerely,

Gene M. Ransom, III
Chief Executive Officer