



Council of Medical
Specialty Societies

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March 10, 2020

The Honorable Dick Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Potential Aid for Industries Impacted by Coronavirus

Dear Senator Durbin:

As the Administration considers federal intervention to support the airline, travel and other targeted industries impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, **the Council of Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS) urges you to also include associations, nonprofits and other tax-exempt organizations within any federal aid packages or supplemental appropriations measures.** Many of our member societies have been and will be harmed by event cancellations and reduced meeting attendance as a result of COVID-19.

The Council of Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS) is the leading organization that convenes medical specialty societies around significant issues in the healthcare and specialty society community. CMSS is comprised of 46 societies with more than 800,000 U.S. physician members. Many of our member specialty societies have already made the difficult, but necessary, decision to cancel their upcoming meetings in order to protect the safety and well-being of front-line clinicians, staff, volunteers, the entire community and the patients they serve.

According to the Events Industry Council's 2018 Economic Significant Study conducted by Oxford Economics¹, more than 1.9 million meetings occur in the United States each year – with more than 250 million attendees. These meetings contribute more than \$446 billion to U.S. gross domestic product and directly support 5.9 million jobs nationwide.

As you are no doubt aware, the fast-spreading COVID-19 epidemic has prompted the cancellation of dozens of major meetings and events in the U.S. and forced other event sponsors to consider cancelling or postponing innumerable other events dependent on in-person attendance at convention centers, hotels and other event facilities. Many of these meetings and events also attract international participants, who generate 11.5 percent (about

¹ Events Industry Council. Economic Significance of Meetings to the US Economy. February 2018. <https://dev-meetingsmeanbusiness.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/Economic%20Significance%20of%20Meetings%20to%20the%20US%20Economy.pdf>

\$38 billion) of direct spending during their visits to the U.S. International travel to the U.S. has dropped sharply during the COVID-19 outbreak and signs point to this trend growing until the virus is brought under control. The U.S. Travel Association forecasts international flights to the U.S. will plummet six percent over the next three months alone, which would be the largest decline since the 2008 economic crisis.

Additionally, many associations operate similarly to small businesses and are greatly impacted if employees are forced to take sick leave or are quarantined as a result of COVID-19 interaction. We are aware the Trump Administration and Congress are considering measures for small businesses that may require cash flow assistance amid the outbreak, and **urge that tax-exempt entities be included in any temporary aid designed to stem the economic fallout resulting from COVID-19.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Burstin', written in a cursive style.

Helen Burstin, MD, MPH, MACP
Executive Vice President and CEO
Council of Medical Specialty Societies

CC:

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