

Congress Passes Another Relief Bill

Congress has passed another round of relief for health care providers and small businesses. The "Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act" provides another \$75 billion for the "Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund," or Provider Relief Fund.

The \$75 billion is on top of the \$100 billion provider relief fund established and funded by Congress in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

ASGE sent a [letter](#) to Congress last week asking for additional financial relief for physician practices and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) and issued an ASGE member "[call to action](#)."

While \$50 billion of the initial \$100 billion is being allocated to Medicare providers, including physician practices and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs), based on their 2018 net revenues, it is unclear how much of the additional \$75 billion will be distributed to providers outside COVID-19 high-impact areas. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have characterized the additional \$75 billion as relief for hospitals, although the law states "eligible health care providers" include Medicare or Medicaid enrolled providers who provide diagnoses, testing, or care for individuals with possible or actual cases of COVID-19.

With the initial distribution of funds, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) broadly defined eligible providers as those who provided diagnoses, testing, or care for individuals with possible or actual cases of COVID-19. HHS clarified that care did not have to be specific to treating COVID-19 and the Department broadly viewed every patient as a possible case of COVID-19. It is unclear whether HHS will apply this broad definition when determining future fund allocations.

Congress is also pouring another \$320 billion into the Paycheck Protection Protection program and an additional \$50 billion for the Disaster Loans Program and an additional \$10 billion for Emergency Economic Injury Disaster Loans.