

**Congressional Fire Services Institute · International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters · National Fire Protection Association
National Volunteer Fire Council**

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the Congressional Fire Services Institute, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the National Fire Protection Association, and the National Volunteer Fire Council, we would like you to release details on how the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) intends to support fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies using the \$100 billion which Congress appropriated to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (P.L. 116-136). Additionally, our organizations urge you to quickly open the application process through which fire departments and EMS agencies can apply for assistance in continuing to care for COVID-19 patients. Firefighters and EMS personnel are serving on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19 and urgently need HHS' full assistance in order to continue caring for their patients in a safe and effective manner.

As you know, fire departments and EMS agencies are struggling to pay for the costs associated with overtime and backfill staffing, procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies, providing continuing training on infection control, retrofitting vehicles to minimize the spread of COVID-19, and direct preparedness and patient care expenses which are not otherwise reimbursed. Last week, Congress provided \$100 billion in supplemental funding to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. The text of P.L. 116-136 specifies that these funds will be available to Medicare and Medicaid enrolled suppliers and provider to assist in covering the financial costs of diagnosing, testing, and caring for COVID-19 patients. These funds are desperately needed as pre-hospital EMS organizations are quickly becoming overwhelmed by the financial costs associated with COVID-19 responses and preparedness. To that end, our organizations also encourage you to reserve at least \$10 billion of these funds specifically to assist fire departments and EMS agencies.

Fire-based EMS agencies are excited by the opportunity to apply for these sorely needed funds. Based on Congress' instructions in P.L. 116-136, these additional funds appropriated to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund are well-positioned to assist in relieving the financial burden placed on fire departments and EMS agencies. America's fire departments and

EMS agencies are eagerly awaiting any information on the application process and scope of applicability for these funds. To that end, we would like HHS to answer the following questions:

- 1) How will HHS use these funds to support fire departments and EMS agencies in procuring PPE and covering costs associated with uncontrollable overtime and staffing?
- 2) When will HHS open the application process for Medicare enrolled suppliers and providers, such as fire departments and EMS agencies, to access these funds?
- 3) How will HHS evaluate funding applications it receives through this program?
- 4) What percentage of the \$100 billion appropriations does HHS plan to reserve for fire departments and EMS agencies?

Our organizations appreciate your assistance in answering these questions and in quickly making these funds available to fire departments and EMS agencies. We look forward to working with you to ensure that these funds are made available through an application process which is easily accessible for all fire departments and EMS agencies.

Sincerely,

Congressional Fire Services Institute
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters
National Fire Protection Association
National Volunteer Fire Council