



May 12, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20101

Dear Secretary Becerra:

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, National Association for Home Care and Hospice, and LeadingAge represent the full continuum of care for older adults, and as a collective represent the full array of hospice and palliative care providers across the United States. We are requesting that HHS extend the COVID-19 public health emergency for an additional 90 days before it expires on July 15, 2022. We want to specifically highlight the need for such an extension for hospice and palliative care providers though the extension is greatly needed for other settings as well.

Hospice and palliative care providers continue to be severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented staffing and testing supply shortages are hindering providers' ability to meet demand for their services. Extending the public health emergency will provide essential support and flexibilities to hospices and palliative care providers as they continue to serve patients safely and effectively in the midst of another COVID-19 surge.

The flexibilities granted during the public health emergency have allowed the hospice and palliative care community to maintain high-quality care despite the challenges the pandemic has imposed. We applaud HHS for its leadership and decisive action to continually renew the PHE declaration in recognition of the fact that COVID-19 is still a major threat to the health and safety of patients and families. The declaration has afforded the hospice and palliative care community the resources and flexibilities necessary to continue serving the most vulnerable Medicare population at the end of life. Section 1135 and other waivers, implemented by both the Congress and CMS, have enabled critical services to be provided via telehealth, and flexibility around some Medicare Hospice Conditions of Participation have eased workforce shortages without sacrificing quality. The waivers have enabled hospice and palliative care providers to respond effectively to the urgent and complex needs of patients and their families and have limited exposure to COVID-19 for seriously-ill individuals and those that care for them. Until it is clear that the pandemic has subsided, assistance and flexibility from the Federal government is crucial.

**We urge immediate action to extend the public health emergency for 90 days past the current July 15, 2022, expiration date.** As new variants have increased infection and hospitalization rates, an extension of the public health emergency is essential to supporting hospice and palliative care providers as they offer care for patients in the home during this difficult time.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and Hospice Action Network  
National Association for Home Care & Hospice  
LeadingAge