

ALS Association Joins Coalition Fighting to Protect Vulnerable Populations in Face of COVID-19

Letter to Congress calls for swift action to expand access to health care and facilitate social distancing

The ALS Association cosigned a letter with 27 patient and consumer organizations calling on Congress to act decisively to slow the spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, particularly among vulnerable populations.

People with pre-existing conditions are at increased risk of infection and adverse health outcomes from COVID-19. For this reason, it is essential that any legislative package taken up in the Senate ensures that the health care system has adequate capacity to provide necessary care to patients with pre-existing conditions and robustly addresses public health needs.

The House of Representatives recently passed supplemental legislation, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, that incorporates several critical changes for our community, including free testing regardless of insurance status, a 6.2 percent increase in the federal Medicaid match that will promote stability in the program, expanded paid work leave to facilitate effective social distancing, expanded access to supplemental nutrition assistance programs, and changes to unemployment insurance to minimize the need for social contacts.

In addition to calling on the Senate to quickly pass the House bill, the 28 organizations are calling for additional measures slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These include measures to remove barriers to treatments up to covering all medical costs related to diagnosis and treatment, removing barriers to Medicaid eligibility, suspending work requirements for Medicaid, rescinding a block grant policy that just went into effect in January to make sure state Medicaid programs can cover the costs of treating COVID-19, and the creation of special open enrollment periods to make sure Americans have coverage that includes COVID-19. We are also calling on additional expansions to paid medical leave laws, expanded access to telemedicine and relaxing restrictions that could prevent patients from meeting CDC guidance on obtaining backup supplies of essential medicines.

The patients and consumers we represent need Congress to take swift action to remove barriers to COVID-19 testing and treatment, promote continuity of care for Americans with serious health conditions, and waive rules that require in-person interactions that promote community spread of COVID-19.