On May 12, 2020, Speaker Pelosi and the House Democratic Committee Chairs introduced HR 6800 “The Heroes Act,” a comprehensive $3 trillion package to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The House is expected to vote on the bill on Friday, May 15 but it does not have the support of the Republican-controlled Senate. However, this package will be the basis for House Democratic negotiations with the Trump Administration for the fifth Congressional COVID-19 response. CMA strongly advocated for many of the provisions included in this legislation that will help sustain the financial viability of physician practices and protect access to care. Our top priorities included increased funding to the Provider Relief Fund, more Medicaid funding, reforming the Medicare Advance Payment Program, helping States, and bolstering efforts for testing and contact tracing. Below is a brief summary.

- Provides an additional $100 billion for the $175 billion HHS Provider Relief fund which includes a more equitable, transparent distribution formula that would reimburse physicians for 100% of their unreimbursed expenses related to COVID-19 and 60% of each individual physician’s/group’s lost revenue from all payers on a quarterly basis.
- Reinstates the Medicare Advance Payment Program with a lower 1% interest rate and a 12-month extended timeline retroactive to March 1.
- Increases federal Medicaid matching funds to states by 14% through June 2021 to help prevent State Medi-Cal cuts; Increases federal match by 10% for States that keep patients in home-health and community-based care; and Increases payments to facilities that serve a high proportion of Medicaid patients.
- Delays implementation of the CMS-proposed Medicaid Fiscal Accountability Rule (MFAR) that would cut Medicaid funding by up to 50% in all 50 states.
- Provides improvements to protect nursing homes.
- Provides $75 billion to state and local governments to support testing and contact tracing.
- Expands Medicaid, ACA Exchange plan, and group health plan coverage for patients with COVID-19 and waives various patient cost-sharing requirements.
- Provides subsidies to cover the cost of COBRA premiums to help employees maintain employer-sponsored coverage once they lose employment.
- Addresses Public Health issues, such as drug shortages, rebuilding the national stockpile, investing in vaccine manufacturing, loan repayment for the public health workforce, and additional funding for the Medical Reserve Corp that is a national network of local volunteers who assist with public health.
- Provides $1 trillion in funding to state and local governments.
+ Dedicates $200 billion to a Heroes’ Fund to provide hazard pay to front line health care workers.
+ For small employers, it improves the Payroll Protection Program, provides another $10 billion to the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan program; and enhances the employee retention tax credit.
+ Extends $600 weekly federal unemployment payments through January 2021, $175 billion in housing assistance, 15% increase to food programs, and provides direct payments up to $6,000 per household.