

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned national organizations representing pathology and laboratory medicine, we write to request that hazard pay for clinical laboratory staff and health professionals providing COVID-19 testing be included in future legislative packages aimed at responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Labor defines hazard pay as “additional pay for performing hazardous duty or work involving physical hardship. Work duty that causes extreme physical discomfort and distress which is not adequately alleviated by protective devices is deemed to impose a physical hardship.”¹ Given the ongoing shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the danger of being exposed to COVID-19 during sample collection, transport, and processing, laboratory staff and health professionals are at high risk of exposure. This risk is causing significant emotional hardship on these essential frontline workers themselves, as well as staffing issues for the laboratory and testing sites, as technicians, scientists, and providers operate around the clock to provide timely COVID-19 test results to patients.

During the April 1st White House Task Force press conference, President Trump expressed support for hazard pay for medical professionals² and this sentiment was also shared the same day by Minority Leader Schumer.³ We are very pleased to see policymakers recognizing the challenges healthcare workers face along with the personal risk they encounter as they provide care for patients with COVID-19 without adequate PPE. We hope that as Congress considers the next legislative package that you also include provisions to provide hazard pay to health professionals as well as their support staff, and that this provision is extended appropriately to include the full range of staff and providers within pathology and laboratory medicine.

Thank you very much for your ongoing leadership as we work together to stem the COVID-19 pandemic and we hope to continue to be a valuable resource to you on testing policies.

¹ <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/wages/hazardpay>

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-01/trump-says-he-s-looking-at-hazard-pay-for-health-care-workers>

³ <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/01/825577637/schumer-calls-for-hazard-pay-for-frontline-workers-in-coronavirus-fight>

Sincerely,

Academy of Clinical Laboratory Physicians and Scientists (ACLPS)

American Association for Clinical Chemistry

American Society for Clinical Pathology

Association for Molecular Pathology

Association of Pathology Chairs

Association of Public Health Laboratories

College of American Pathologists

Infectious Diseases Society of America

Pan American Society for Clinical Virology

CC: Sen. Lamar Alexander, Sen. Patty Murray, Sen. Chuck Grassley, Sen. Ron Wyden, Rep. Bobby Scott, Rep. Virginia Foxx, Rep. Richard Neal, and Rep. Kevin Brady