

April 3, 2020

Phil Mendelson
Chair, Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

CC: All members of the Council

Dear Chair Mendelson:

As the Council considers emergency legislation, the physician community strongly urges you to include legislative language providing financial support for all physicians during the public health emergency.

Independent physician practices throughout the city are suffering financially during the public health emergency. If the District's goal is to keep residents out of hospitals, independent and private practices need financial support to weather the next few weeks of "shelter in place". Telemedicine is an avenue for some practices to connect with patients, but many specialties cannot treat patients over the phone. These practices will cease to exist without patients over the next few weeks, and without them the District will be unable to handle the post-COVID-19 caseload of medical need.

In addition, physicians are a major part of the local economy. Physicians contribute \$301.3 million to the District in local taxes and each physician supports on average 7.59 jobs. Physicians support \$4.4 billion in benefits and wages in the District. If physician offices need to lay off staff or close, the impact on the District's economy will be devastating.

In addition to providing financial support for District hospital and hospital health care workers, I urge you to include a COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Grant fund in your second emergency supplemental that would allow physician practices to apply for grants and short-term loans to stay in operation until the public health emergency passes. Without such loan programs, residents of the District may be unable to see their community physicians, and the District health care system will be unable to meet the needs of its citizens. Now is the time to support the health care workforce, both working in hospital systems and working in tandem with hospital systems.

Sincerely,



J. Desiree Pineda, MD, FACP
President, MSDC