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SENATOR ZELNOR Y. MYRIE
20TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Alex Azar
Secretary, United States Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Cc:

Dr. Howard Zucker
Commissioner, New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza,
Albany, NY 12237

Dr. Oxiris Barbot
Commissioner, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
125 Worth Street, CN17A
New York, NY 10013

May 12, 2020

Dear Secretary Azar:

Last week, thanks to the strong advocacy of our New York Congressional delegation, the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) authorized over \$5 billion dollars in emergency COVID-19 funding for New York “hot spot” hospitals.¹ As the representative of some of the hardest hit hospitals in the nation, **I write today to ask that New York City hospitals receive their fair share of this funding.**

Recognizing that inpatient admissions are a primary driver of COVID-19 related costs, HHS based its state distribution of “hot spot” funding on numbers of inpatient admissions.² According to HHS, each hospital should receive funding equal to \$76,975 per admission.³

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/covid-19-high-impact-allocation.pdf>

² <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/cares-act-provider-relief-fund/payment-allocation-methodology/index.html>

³ *Id.*

Tragically, New York City has been the epicenter of this crisis with over 48,000 hospital admissions as of May 11.⁴ In Brooklyn alone, there have been at least 12,982 hospitalizations.⁵ **Based on the federal “hot spot” formula, New York City hospitals should receive at least \$3.7 billion with Brooklyn hospitals receiving at least \$632 million of that allocation.**

I understand that HHS is statutorily required to report state-level allocation data by May 26, 2020, and every 60 days thereafter.⁶ I am worried, however, that this reporting deadline may come after the individual hospital allocation decisions have been made, especially given that some hospitals have already begun to receive hot spot funding. I am therefore requesting a fair and transparent decision-making process that provides the communities most impacted by COVID-19 with the resources they deserve.

New York City “hot spot” hospitals, including the two public hospitals I represent (Kings County and the University Hospital of Brooklyn) were already subject to state budget cuts in the middle of this pandemic.⁷ Our communities, mostly black and brown and already devastated disproportionately by the virus, cannot afford another budgetary blow by way of an unfair allocation of federal dollars. My hope is that this “hot spot” allocation is but a first step in commensurate relief.

I urge our federal, state, and city health departments to work together to ensure a fair distribution of hospital funding, particularly in light of previous and looming budget cuts proposed by the state. Even as the curve declines, every day counts, and the sooner our most impacted hospitals can receive their fair share, the sooner our communities can begin the long road of recovery ahead.

Thank you for your consideration.



Zellnor Y. Myrie
NYS Senator
20th District, Brooklyn

⁴ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>

⁵ <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-daily-data-summary-hospitalizations-05112020-1.pdf>

⁶ H.R. 6074, “CARES Act”

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/26/nyregion/coronavirus-new-york-university-hospital.html>