June 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Speaker  Majority Leader
House of Representatives  United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader  Minority Leader
House of Representatives  United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders:

As organizations focused on emergency health care access, particularly in rural America, we are writing to thank you for your continued support of frontline responders combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. We are a group of health care, consumer, and public safety organizations, as well as patient advocates, who appreciate the critical importance of emergency air medical services during this health crisis. As you continue to craft legislation and allocate funding to support health care workers, we ask for your consideration of these hidden heroes – those who may be less visible, but who are nonetheless integral in the fight against coronavirus.

Air ambulances, equipped with ventilators and highly trained medical staff, provide swift transport to the nearest hospital for patients in critical condition when every second counts. More and more often, this includes COVID-19 patients suffering respiratory distress or in need of inter-facility transport while remaining intubated. Early estimates indicate that the industry has transported over 1,500 COVID-19 positive cases since the beginning of the pandemic, a number that will drastically increase over the next 12-18 months as the virus spreads to more rural parts of the country.

Air medical services are especially important in rural America where hospital closures have reduced access to emergency medical care for millions of Americans. As the coronavirus moves inland, air ambulances fill the gap left by these closures, transporting patients from overrun and under-equipped rural facilities to hospitals with the capacity to treat them. A recent example from Grand Island, Nebraska – a rural hotspot for coronavirus – reveals the massive increase in air ambulance transports taking place due to the virus.

Emergency air medical services also provide critical support to those who have suffered a major cardiac event, stroke, or trauma such as brain injury. In normal times, these patients account for 90 percent of those transported. These individuals will continue to need access to immediate emergency care even after the pandemic is over, and we must ensure the industry is there to help them.
We want to ensure air medical providers engaged in the frontline fight have access to resources provided by Congress in response to COVID-19. It is important that patients continue to have access to the life-saving services provided by air ambulances, and we urge you to help protect this critical service.

Sincerely,

Association of Air Medical Services
Brain Injury Association of America
Consumer Action
Helicopter Association International
International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics
Save Our Air Medical Resources