

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD, 21244

Dear Administrator Verma,

We write to urge swift consideration of Washington state's application for an emergency demonstration project under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act. As you know, Washington state continues to experience rapid spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). As of March 25, 2020, there are 2,472 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Washington state and 125 deaths from the disease. Experts expect further significant increases in the number of cases in the coming days and weeks. On March 24, as part of the state's comprehensive response to the outbreak, the Washington Health Care Authority submitted an 1115 waiver application to provide the state with needed flexibilities to respond to the outbreak. This is a multi-state agency request in supplement to Governor Inslee's previous 1115/1135 request approved on March 19.

Washington state needs tools to respond fully and forcefully to COVID-19 in order to blunt its spread and to ensure that people who can be appropriately cared for outside of hospital settings do not have to occupy scarce beds. If approved, the State's 1115 waiver seeks to establish, among other things, a COVID-19 Disaster Relief Fund and includes measures to ensure all residents have access to necessary testing and treatment.

The COVID-19 Disaster Relief Fund will help Washington state to stabilize providers as they rapidly implement new and expanded care delivery sites while simultaneously confronting unprecedented economic disruptions. The fund will allow providers to access needed equipment, broaden access to COVID-19 testing and care, and respond to surging healthcare demand. Further, the fund can be used to provide temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness to open up critically needed beds and to offer expanded nutrition supports to vulnerable populations to protect them and enable success of social distancing efforts.

The application also requests flexibility to expand coverage eligibility above current levels. Access to coverage is essential to ensure that all residents seek out healthcare services for testing and treatment. Eligibility expansion will be used to help low-income residents get testing and treatment with no or low out of pocket costs.

We request that CMS conduct a rapid review of the Washington state 1115 waiver application. Washington state is moving rapidly to address the COVID-19 outbreak and the flexibilities requested in this application are critical to meeting the demands of this emergency, protecting Washingtonians and limiting the spread of this disease.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



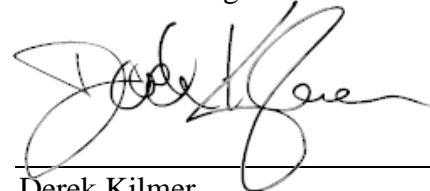
Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



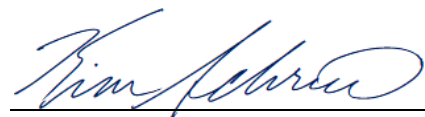
Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress