

March 21, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

Thank you for your continued leadership in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for your unwavering commitment to protecting patients through policies requiring strong insurance coverage and reimbursement of COVID-19 testing. Both congressional and administrative actions to mandate coverage of and protect access to COVID-19 testing, regardless of a patient's insurance status (including uninsured patients), have been critical to maintaining access to COVID-19 testing for all Americans. As negotiations continue for further appropriations to help manage the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge Congress to prioritize additional appropriations to fund COVID-19 testing for uninsured individuals through the COVID-19 Uninsured Relief Fund.

The American Clinical Laboratory Association (ACLA) is the national trade association representing leading laboratories that deliver essential diagnostic health information to patients and providers. In March 2020, ACLA member laboratories were among the first to validate and scale novel tests for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Since then, ACLA members have performed more than 190 million PCR tests for COVID-19, while adapting testing platforms and workflows, navigating supply constraints and working creatively and collaboratively with federal, state and local governments to meet patients' evolving health needs.

In 2021, ACLA members performed more than 8 million tests for uninsured individuals, which were covered by the COVID-19 Uninsured Relief Fund. **During the peak of the Omicron variant wave from January to February 2022 alone, ACLA members were performing 500,000 tests per month for uninsured individuals.**

The COVID-19 Uninsured Relief Fund originally was established by the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* and has been replenished throughout the pandemic, most recently through the *2021 American Rescue Plan Act*. This critical program has provided life-saving access to COVID-19 testing for uninsured individuals and ensured that all Americans could access a test when needed; however, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which administers the program, has notified test providers that the fund has run out of money and, therefore, no longer will accept claims for uninsured individuals as of March 22, 2022.

As we continue into the next phase of the pandemic, testing remains an important tool in clinical and public health efforts. In the face of rising COVID-19 cases in Europe and certain regions in the United States, we must be vigilant about a new national wave of infections and fortify response efforts that we know are effective, including access to testing through the COVID-19 Uninsured Relief Fund. The federal government must continue to protect COVID-19 testing and ensure that all Americans, regardless of insurance status, will have



access to COVID-19 testing without cost sharing. The COVID-19 Uninsured Relief Fund is essential to fulfilling this promise. Without question, the exhaustion of these funds will threaten access to testing for the most vulnerable Americans at a critical time in our nation's response effort. We should not allow essential elements of our public health response to expire prematurely and jeopardize life-saving services for patients in the process.

We join others in urging Congress and the Administration to work together to replenish the COVID-19 Uninsured Relief Fund immediately and renew this critical source of access to COVID-19 testing for the uninsured.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas B. Sparkman", is written in a cursive style.

Thomas B. Sparkman
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs & Policy

CC:
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Richard Shelby