

MARK ALFORD
4th DISTRICT, MISSOURI

1516 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2504
(202) 225-2876

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2023

Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Administrator Criswell,

I am writing to you about the Duplication of Benefits (DOB) review process implemented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to disburse funds to hospitals that provide services and treatment in the wake of an emergency. The financial burden of the COVID response has been particularly hard on small, rural healthcare providers in Missouri's Fourth Congressional District, which I have the honor of serving.

Several healthcare providers have reached out to me concerned about their financial situation, which has been exasperated by the lengthy and indeterminate wait time caused by the DOB review process. For these reasons, I am requesting that you direct FEMA to accelerate the review process to help our healthcare providers receive the funds they need to help my constituents.

Nevada Regional Medical Center (NRMC), located in Vernon County, has two projects (DR4490MO # 242889 and 708347) for which they utilized a FEMA-approved DOB review methodology, reduced the original claimed amounts, and has been awaiting final review from FEMA for nearly 5 months. The total claimed amount is \$1.6 million. This amounts to 84% of monthly payroll and equates to 13.5 days of operating cash that is tied up while awaiting completion of the DOB review and final review. NRMC is a financially distressed hospital, and it is a safety net hospital as the only hospital within one hour in any direction that delivers babies and has an inpatient psychiatric program.

Bothwell Regional Health Center (Bothwell), located in Pettis County, has two projects (DR4490MO # 689802 and 689805) that have been pending final review since June 2, 2023. Bothwell applied a FEMA-approved DOB review methodology and reduced the original claim amounts to eliminate any duplication. These two projects total \$2,083,332, representing 5 days of cash on hand. As a rural hospital, Bothwell provides essential emergency and surgical services, cancer care, and obstetrics for a large surrounding area.

Citizens Memorial Hospital, located in Polk County, has two projects (DR4490MO # 674872 and 698701) that were obligated by FEMA on 8/9/22 and 1/27/23, respectively, and have been awaiting final review. The total claimed amount is \$1.99 million. This amounts to 24% of monthly payroll and equates to 3.5 days of cash on hand. Citizens Memorial Hospital is a sole community hospital and another safety net hospital.

Citizens Memorial Health Care Foundation (the Foundation) has three projects (DR4490MO #665673, #679636, and #699654) that were obligated on 6/23/22, 10/12/22, and 1/26/23, respectively, and have been awaiting final review from FEMA. The total claimed amount for the three projects is nearly \$3.2 million. This amounts to 130% of monthly payroll and equates to 16 days of cash on hand. The Foundation is a non-profit entity that operates skilled nursing facilities (600 licensed beds) in rural southwest Missouri. Just to continue operating, the Foundation has fully drawn on all its bank lines of credit and has now borrowed over \$6 million in the last 16 months. Recently, several nursing homes have closed in the surrounding areas, decreasing availability of long-term care beds to our communities.

Golden Valley Memorial Healthcare (GVMH), located in Henry County, submitted an application (083-U6H1Q-00), and funds were obligated on June 21, 2022. The claimed amount for this project is \$2.4 million. They have been told the claim has had priority status since June of this year, but they have not received any further information on the status of this claim.

The continued delay of these funds is unacceptable and poses a severe risk to the survival of our healthcare providers. I hope you agree that a government process should not force them to close their doors. We must work together to ensure there is adequate oversight of reimbursements balanced with reducing the undue burden on rural medical centers by accelerating the DOB review process. Rural providers face heightened financial pressure, and a more expeditious review process would help alleviate some pressure.

It greatly concerns me that rural providers, which truly are a lifeline to so many in Missouri's Fourth Congressional District, are struggling to stay in service while awaiting completion of the DOB review and final review by FEMA. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving a status report from you regarding the above claims.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Alford', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Alford
Member of Congress

Cc: Ms. Andrea Spillars
Region 7 Administrator
FEMA
2323 Grand Boulevard, Suite 900
Kansas City, MO 64108

Catherine Sanders
Region 7 Deputy Administrator
FEMA
2323 Grand Boulevard, Suite 900
Kansas City, MO 64108