

January 5, 2021

Alex M. Azar  
Secretary  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20101

Dear Secretary Azar:

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization is writing today to request that you make it a top priority to extend the public health emergency due to COVID-19 for another 90 days before it expires on January 21, 2021. Like other health care providers, hospice and palliative care providers have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Extending the Public Health Emergency will provide essential support to hospices and palliative care providers as they continue to serve patients safely and effectively, as communities continue to grapple with COVID-19.

NHPCO is the nation's largest membership organization for hospice providers and professionals who care for people affected by serious and life-limiting illness. Its broad community of members includes local hospice and palliative care providers, networks serving large regions of the United States, and individual professionals. NHPCO's members provide care in more than 4,000 hospice and palliative care locations and care for over two thirds of the Medicare beneficiaries served by hospice. In addition, hospice and palliative care members employ nearly 60,000 professionals and hundreds of thousands of volunteers.

The hospice and palliative care community can better serve our patients due to the flexibilities granted during the Public Health Emergency. Through waiver authority granted during the Public Health Emergency, effective January 27, 2020 and extended effective April 26 and October 23, 2020, has provided the hospice and palliative care community with necessary resources and flexibilities through approved Section 1135 waivers, allowing critical services to be provided via telehealth, and flexibility for some Medicare Hospice Conditions of Participation. The waivers have enabled hospice and palliative care providers to respond effectively to the urgent and complex needs of our patients and their families and to limit the exposure to COVID-19 by patients, families, and staff.

**We urge immediate action to extend the PHE for 90 days past the January 21, 2021 expiration date.** As today's infection and death rates continue to trend upward, an extension of the PHE is

essential to allowing hospice and palliative care providers to offer care for patients in need during this difficult time.

Thank you for your consideration. For additional information or if you have questions, please contact Hannah Yang Moore, Chief Advocacy Officer, NHPCO at [hmoore@nhpco.org](mailto:hmoore@nhpco.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edo Banach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edo" and last name "Banach" clearly distinguishable.

Edo Banach, J.D.  
President and CEO