

March 17, 2022

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

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

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 205110

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McCarthy, and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) appreciates the many actions already taken by Congress to help physicians and their patients meet the demands of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Like all Americans, we are grateful to be living under fewer pandemic precautions at the moment, but our nation's work to manage COVID-19 and protect its citizens is far from over.

As we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of new variants emerging, we are concerned that much-needed COVID relief provisions were not included in the final Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022.

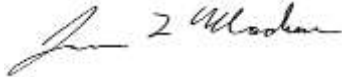
If we are to continue to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on our patients and our health care system, proper funding for COVID-19 mitigation measures and treatment options is critical. Otherwise, programs offering COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters will be forced to wind down and our ability to secure additional booster doses or possible variant-specific vaccines will be in question. Access to essential COVID-19 therapeutics, already in short supply and critical to limit severe illness and hospitalization for the significant number of Americans who remain unvaccinated, will be threatened as the government will be unable to procure additional doses for the general population. Lack of funding will also threaten our current COVID-19 testing capacity. Testing availability, which has been a consistent challenge throughout the course of the pandemic, remains a critical tool to help manage the spread of COVID-19. We must continue to provide funding that mitigates shortages and will allow for free and/or affordable testing capabilities for both at-home antigen testing and laboratory-based testing services.

Available data, including that from Europe and domestic wastewater surveillance, indicate that we are very likely to begin seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases within the next few weeks as the BA.2 omicron subvariant begins to constitute a greater share of case numbers at home and abroad. Despite this subvariant's increased transmissibility, we have the tools available to help limit the spread and limit additional severe illness and death from COVID-19. To do so, however, we must realize that the threat of COVID-19 is not over and provide appropriate funding to ensure the tools we have remain as widely available and accessible as possible.

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Physicians clearly appreciate the impact of COVID-19 fatigue, and no group of professionals is more eager to move past this pandemic. But variants are still emerging, and our population is still at risk, despite the tools we have. We urge you to resume bipartisan discussions to craft a new COVID-19 relief package that can be passed swiftly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD