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April 26, 2021

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
United States Senate
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Sullivan and Murphy:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for S. 509, the “Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities (LINC) to Address Social Needs Act.” The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need to address nonmedical, yet critical, health needs and the underlying determinants of health: economic stability, neighborhoods, transportation, education and life opportunities, access to food, quality and safe housing, community/social support, and access to health care. The AMA applauds you for introducing this legislation, which will provide critical network infrastructure support allowing for enhanced communication capabilities among physicians, social services, and community resources to help patients overcome longstanding challenges associated with social determinants of health.

The LINC to Address Social Needs Act would require the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to award grants to states, on a competitive basis, to support the establishment of new or enhancement of existing community integration network infrastructure to connect health care providers to social services organizations to help patients overcome longstanding accessibility challenges to food, housing, child development, job training, and transportation supports and services. Research increasingly points to the important role of the social determinants of health, or the conditions in the places people live, learn, work, and play, which affect approximately 80 percent of patient health outcomes. The AMA believes that the provision of health care services, as well as optimizing the social determinants of health, are ethical obligations of a civil society. However, this requires partnerships among all levels of government, the private sector, and non-profit, philanthropic, and tribal organizations, to address non-medical, yet critical health needs and the underlying social determinants of health. While it is critical to recognize and understand the impact of social determinants of health, it is even more important to develop solutions to address these key factors. Your bill is a big step forward in doing so.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you to achieve passage of the LINC to Address Social Needs Act.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD