

Sept. 11, 2017

On behalf of the nearly 500 Texas hospital and health system members that comprise the Texas Hospital Association, I am writing to express the association's thanks for your support as hospitals in Southeast Texas recover and rebuild from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey.

As you know, Hurricane Harvey inflicted flooding and devastation across Southeast Texas that will take months, if not years, from which to recover. The cost of recovery and rebuilding could be unprecedented. Hospitals, as anchors and often the largest employers in their communities, will need ongoing help and support so that they, in turn, can help rebuild their communities and, importantly, ensure that a public health crisis does not follow on the heels of a natural one.

As of today, there are just four hospitals that remain closed. This achievement cannot be overstated and is testament to the commitment of hospital employees to serving their communities and to local, state and federal agency support and assistance. We are particularly grateful for the responsiveness of the staff in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' regional office in Dallas for their quick response to the multiple requests for waivers of various Medicare rules and policies.

We do, however, have remaining challenges related to outpatient capacity, staffing and displaced patients. In addition, the fiscal impacts of the storm for closed facilities and those that remained open during the storm will take time to fully uncover. Likewise, the personal costs for the many hospital employees who risked their own lives and kept facilities running knowing that their families and property likely were at risk will be considerable. THA is surveying our members to obtain a full accounting of the fiscal impacts of the storm on hospitals and has established an employee assistance fund to provide financial help for those hospital caregivers.

In the coming weeks, THA will seek help from the Texas delegation on several fronts to ensure that Texas hospitals have the necessary financial resources to resume full operations and that care for all patients is maintained. This will include support for:

- 1) Repeal of the cuts to Medicaid disproportionate share hospital payments scheduled to take effect Oct. 1.
- 2) A temporary technical change to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to allow more hospitals to be eligible for FEMA assistance.
- 3) In the event that the Stafford Act is not amended, another financing mechanism, such as the creation of a temporary pool of funding to cover hospitals' uncompensated, unreimbursed costs.

We will provide more information about these requests shortly, but, for now, please be assured of our thanks for your continued support of Texas hospitals and our work to provide the highest quality care to all Texans, particularly in this time of crisis and recovery.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Ted Shaw
President/CEO
Texas Hospital Association