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March 24, 2020

Donald J. Trump, President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President, Madam Speaker and Leaders McConnell, Schumer and McCarthy:

I'm writing in response to the novel Coronavirus and resulting disease COVID-19 public health crisis to underscore the specialized needs of the tens of millions of people living with and at risk for lung cancer. As Co-Founder, President & CEO of GO₂ Foundation for Lung Cancer (a merger of Lung Cancer Alliance and the Addario Lung Cancer Foundation), whose mission is transforming survivorship by saving, extending and improving the lives of those vulnerable, at risk and diagnosed with lung cancer, I must bring to your attention the specific actions needed to support the lung cancer community.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among men and women, every racial and ethnic group in every state nationwide. Each year, approximately 230,000 Americans are newly diagnosed with the disease and historically patients with lung cancer have experienced an exceptionally low survival rate (five-year survival rate of just over 19%) due to the overarching stigma and lack of early detection and treatment options. Lung cancer is not just one disease but many diseases, often with high rate of mutations or tumor changes, but with recent exciting and dramatic breakthroughs including life-saving screening and approval of more personalized and targeted drug therapies, we are now seeing a

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transformative shift in the management of the disease, patient quality of life during treatment and increased survivorship.

Today, oncology practices and all medical providers are dealing with an unprecedented, demanding situation. In order to keep staff safe from COVID-19, non-clinical staff are working remotely from home, and patient treatment schedules are being adjusted or delayed to minimize their in-person contact and preserve clinician time and resources for the present crisis. As a result, we are at great risk of losing critical advancements in the disease prevention, detection and treatments if lung cancer patients do not receive timely treatment or the necessary supportive care.

Thank you for enacting [the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020](#) and [the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), which has resulted in various agencies of the U.S. government responding to and taking action to prevent the worst impact of this outbreak. While the coronavirus supplemental packages include several changes in order to continue to protect all Americans from COVID-19 and promote precision care for those with serious health conditions, such as our lung cancer community, seniors and other cancer patients who are the most at risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19. **Nevertheless, more action is needed.** I urgently request the Administration and Congress to add stronger provisions or definitive language in the next federal act to remove all administrative burdens and financial barriers, so that access to specialty care and medically necessary treatments are accessible for all American patients during the COVID-19 crisis.

Removing Barriers to Care—Prior Authorization Waiver

It seems that several commercial insurance companies are taking steps to waive prior authorization requirements for COVID-19 tests and related treatments. Similarly, we believe **all** private health insurance companies serving the Medicare Advantage, Managed Medicaid, Medicaid and the commercial insurance markets need to waive prior authorization requirements immediately for all cancer treatment during the COVID-19 crisis.

“Prior authorization” is a utilization management process used by health insurance companies to determine coverage for a prescribed procedure, service, or medication, which can also yield significant delays or denial of payment for covered services and hinder the delivery of timely patient care. Even in normal times, we have seen patients, oncologists, and other healthcare staff face enormous challenges in obtaining prior authorization approvals. Additional requirements suppressing access to care during this current crisis when the healthcare force is already overburdened will disrupt and threaten cancer treatment for our community and all cancer patients.

Medication Access & Supply

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has encouraged patients to stock up on extra supplies of their medications to comply with social distancing guidelines. While the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have encouraged flexibility in Medicare and States now have 1135 waivers to relax medication refill limits, yet many forms of insurance still place limits on refills. We advocate for the provision to require all payers to allow for an emergency supply of medications at the CDC

recommended extra 30 day supply, which will give a total 90 day supply to patients to avoid treatment disruptions and frequent visits to the pharmacy.

State & Medicaid Relief

While we support the legislative efforts to increase Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) in Medicaid by 6.2% for medical and administrative costs, we ask for additional state financial relief to help states and territories address public health demands. Given the states' financial resources at this time to cover COVID-19 related needs, they are in need of help to absorb the economic impact of this crisis, including expanding Medicaid and efforts to prevent major budget cuts and massive layoffs in state and local governments.

Access to Coverage & Care

Based on our healthcare principles, we strongly believe all Americans should have access to affordable and high-quality healthcare coverage. We therefore support the position that a special enrollment period should be open to allow new enrollees without delay or limitations during this public health crisis. Additionally, we ask the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take steps to ensure immediate coverage by educating the public and promoting about the special enrollment option that includes Medicaid eligibility. Furthermore, HHS should make special efforts to reach employers and employees most at-risk of losing employer-based coverage to ensure that no Americans are uninsured during this crisis.

Patient's Access to Telehealth Services

We agree on the need to focus on digital health and recommend the promotion and full adoption of telehealth services across the nation to ensure patients' continued and ongoing access to comprehensive and affordable care. We thank you for expanding the use of telehealth services and codes under Medicare. We request that **all** insurance companies expand the use of telehealth for all patients at this time.

Non-Profit Organization Support

Another critical issue is the demand for assistance while both patients and their supporting organizations are being impacted on all fronts by the public health crisis. GO₂ Foundation receives telephone, online and email inquiries on our patient HelpLine and support services platforms regarding transportation and financial resources to access treatment. During this time of crisis we need the government to consider and provide financial assistance or greater community resources to help navigate patients to where they can receive help. We also advocate to include nonprofit patient or community based organizations within any federal aid packages to allow us to continue to fill the void of patient services at no cost.

Flattening the Curve of COVID-19 with More Flexibilities

We support and encourage the public health strategy to combat the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing. In order to realize the full impact of reducing instances of gatherings, particularly for severe to chronic disease patients, we recommend flexibilities that allows patients to receive appropriate treatment at home, including therapies such as the Medicare-covered Part B infused medications from qualified practitioners in the safety of patient homes.

Continuing Life-Saving Research

We recognize the unintended impact that social distancing or quarantines, site closures, travel limitations and healthcare workforce limitations is having on research and clinical trials. We applaud the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s recent guidance to provide general considerations to assist sponsors in adapting ongoing clinical trials while assuring the safety of clinical trial participants, maintaining compliance with good clinical practice and minimizing risks to trial integrity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many ongoing trials were likely to lead to FDA approvals of critically needed new cancer therapies that our community so desperately needs. Issuing new or more flexibilities such as this will allow as many trials as possible to continue to produce lifesaving treatments safely during this crisis.

Thank you for your leadership and for your guidance at a time when America is facing the greatest public health crisis. It is most critical that our nation's leaders come together to make continued improvements and dedicate further investments to stop and end COVID-19. As you continue your work, GO₂ Foundation is committed to working with you to ensure greater choice and greater access to high-quality care in an affordable and equitable way for all patients in all communities.

Please contact my staff, Elridge Proctor, Senior Director, Government Affairs at 202-742-1427 or email Eproctor@go2foundation.org with any questions or information.

Sincerely,



Laurie Fenton Ambrose
Co-Founder, President & CEO
GO₂ Foundation for Lung Cancer

CC: Mike Pence, Vice President of the United States
Alex Azar, Secretary of Health and Human Services
Seema Verma, Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services