

Shore Medical Center and Cape Regional Medical Center, along with other hospitals left out of recent COVID-19 funding

Heeding to the directives of the Federal and State governments, hospitals across the country discontinued elective surgeries and all other non-emergent services in mid-March. The reasoning was to ensure the safety of the staff and public, and to allocate every resource possible to protect the frontline clinicians and to treat patients infected with the COVID-19 virus.

This was absolutely the right decision, and while tragically too many lives were lost, many others were saved, and we were able to protect our staff and care for the sick. Hospitals are still abiding by the guidance of the Federal and State governments, and remain completely focused on COVID-19.

The discontinuation of services, while necessary, is proving to be financially crippling to many hospitals. With no revenue coming in for elective surgeries and procedures, hospitals took measures that included staff reductions in non-clinical areas and salary adjustments. But these measures alone were not enough. The government knew this, and therefore passed bills to provide financial relief to the hospitals.

According to website of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), on May 1, the HHS awarded \$12 billion to 395 hospitals that provided inpatient care for 100 or more COVID-19 patients through April 10, 2020, \$2 billion of which will be distributed to these hospitals based on their Medicare and Medicaid disproportionate share and uncompensated care payments. There is also \$10 billion awarded to rural hospitals, many of which were operating on thin margins prior to COVID-19 and have also been particularly devastated by this pandemic. As non-COVID-19 patients delay care and cancel elective services, rural hospitals are struggling to keep their doors open.

While this relief is to be applauded, many hospitals are left out of the distribution, including Shore Medical Center and Cape Regional Medical Center. We need to make sure that assistance represents the shared sacrifices that healthcare workers at our medical centers have made.

- Shore and Cape Regional abided by all Federal and State guidelines to protect their staff and care for COVID-19 patients by shutting down services. As a result, they have lost millions of dollars.
- Shore and Cape Regional have treated symptomatic COVID-19 patients as far back as January, and these patients are not included in the HHS's minimum threshold of 100 patients admitted prior to April 10, 2020. If these patients were included, Shore and Cape

Regional would receive the funding that they deserve. Instead, they, their patients, and their staff have been forgotten.

We have been blessed to have received generous support from our community, but the funds raised only offset a fraction of what was lost.

Fortunately, the number of diagnosed cases in Atlantic and Cape May counties have been relatively low so far. But whether it was one patient treated or 100, Shore and Cape Regional embraced the same risk as every other hospital. Every patient's life and every clinician who cared for them should be counted and valued the same as those in other hospitals in the state and across the country.

We need your help to make sure that everyone matters, regardless of the size of the hospital or the community it serves. **Please contact your United States Senators Cory Booker at (973) 639-8700 and Robert Menendez at (973) 645-3030 who represent New Jersey.** Let them know that we appreciate the great work they are doing in helping with legislation to support New Jersey hospitals and healthcare workers to ask HHS to correct this oversight.

We are all supposed to be in this together.