

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
[April 1, 2020]

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## **The Health Services Cost Review Commission Works to Fortify Maryland's Hospitals During A Coronavirus Surge**

*Maryland's hospital regulatory agency is working to stabilize hospital funding and assist in the expansion of hospital capacity in preparation for an expected surge in novel coronavirus patients*

**BALTIMORE, MD** – As Maryland prepares for a potential novel coronavirus outbreak, hospitals will play a crucial role in treating patients that contract the virus. The State's hospital cost and quality regulatory agency, the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC), is working on approaches to ensure hospitals have the funding needed to expand capacity so that Marylanders have access to critical emergency and intensive inpatient services.

Hospitals in communities across Maryland have already made numerous changes to prepare for the impact of the virus. Using guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hospitals are reviewing emergency plans and preparing additional testing space, beds, and equipment to be able to screen and treat patients with the acute respiratory symptoms associated with the coronavirus.

“If the number of coronavirus cases continues to increase, hospitals will need additional financial resources to further expand capacity.” says Adam Kane, Chairman of the HSCRC. “Our agency is taking action now to ensure hospitals are appropriately funded and ready for the potential surge of patients.”

Under the leadership of Governor Hogan and Maryland Department of Health Secretary Robert Neall, HSCRC is also working with the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC), and the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) to immediately address regulatory, licensure, and charging barriers in order to quickly add new capacity to treat patients affected by the coronavirus.

“We are preparing for an increase in cases of novel coronavirus, and we want hospitals and health care systems to be ready,” said Secretary Neall. “Maryland will pursue federal funding to help supplement the costs associated with the expanded care and resources that may be needed to care for Marylanders affected by this pandemic.”

In order to ensure hospital finances remain sound, especially as health systems gear up for coronavirus-related cases, the HSCRC is setting up a special emergency funding mechanism to identify and account for costs related to screening, treating, staffing, and supply needs. The agency is also working to waive certain protocols to help hospitals expedite the process to get new testing space approved and set up.

According to Katie Wunderlich, executive director of the HSCRC: “We are establishing new temporary emergency reimbursement policies so hospitals can quickly add emergency and ICU services in response to this unprecedented emergency. This is only possible because of the flexibility offered through Maryland’s unique hospital payment system.”

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**About the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission**

*The Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission is the state agency responsible for regulating cost and quality of hospitals in order to ensure all Marylanders have access to high quality healthcare services. We constrain hospital costs, ensure that hospitals have the financial ability to provide efficient, high quality services to all Marylanders, and work to increase the equity and fairness of hospital financing. To learn more about our work, visit: [www.hscrc.maryland.gov](http://www.hscrc.maryland.gov)*