April 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
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 Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, representing more than 60,000 physicians and partners dedicated to advancing women’s health, thank you for the actions you have taken thus far to address COVID-19, including support for physician practices. While we are starting to realize the short-term implications of COVID-19 on our economy, workforce, and public health, we also must anticipate the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the financial and physical health of our Nation. We are concerned with reports that the Paycheck Protection Program, authorized by P.L. 116-136, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, has exhausted available funds. We urge you to take immediate supplemental action to appropriate additional funding for the program, and to provide additional financial assistance to struggling physician practices of all sizes. Without action, our Nation’s health care infrastructure will be further weakened, and Americans will face compromised access to critical care.

Obstetrician-gynecologists are on the frontlines of responding to this public health emergency. Many obstetrician-gynecologists in private practice are small business owners, operating small and medium-sized clinical practices. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, including recommendations of social distancing, postponing outpatient visits and delaying elective surgeries and procedures, many of these practices are facing serious financial strain. These are doctors who, among other things, treat cancers, care for women with chronic pelvic and bladder disorders (including through necessary surgeries), treat infertility, provide critically important preventive care, and care for women throughout their lifespan. Our member physicians are confronting difficult financial decisions in an effort to continue serving their patients, including furloughing staff, reducing or completely foregoing their own salary, and even bearing the operating costs of their practices with their own private funds. These temporary solutions are not sustainable. Each passing week that goes by brings many practices closer to permanently closing their doors, threatening access to care far beyond the current pandemic.

We therefore urge you to take immediate supplemental action to authorize direct financial support, grants, and interest-free loans and other mechanisms, such as a 9/11-type COVID fund, for physician practices of
all sizes to ensure that they can remain afloat to meet the demands of this crisis and the ongoing health care needs of all of their patients. Including:

- Appropriating additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program
- Providing an emergency, one-time grant for all clinicians to assist with overhead costs, similar to provisions in S. 3559/H.R. 6365, the Immediate Relief for Rural Facilities and Providers Act of 2020
- Ensuring financial relief programs prioritize physician practices of all sizes

Thank you for your swift attention and consideration of these important priorities. We look forward to working with you to advance supplemental funding, and on the development of additional stimulus legislation to address continued needs of physicians and patients responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please contact Rachel Tetlow, ACOG Director of Federal Affairs, at rtetlow@acog.org or 585-746-0237, with any questions.

Sincerely,

Maureen G. Phipps, MD, MPH, FACOG
Chief Executive Officer
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Cc: The Honorable Nydia Velazquez, Chair, House Committee on Small Business
    The Honorable Steve Chabot, Ranking Member, House Committee on Small Business
    The Honorable Marco Rubio, Chair, Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship
    The Honorable Ben Cardin, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship
    The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
    The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
    The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
    The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations