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Engel Leads NY Delegation to Provide Relief for NY Hospitals

By BRYANT DANIELS

Congressman Eliot L. Engel led the New York House Delegation in a bipartisan letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy urging them to forgive advance Medicare payments in the next stimulus package, which provides financial support to New York hospitals treating coronavirus patients.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act created a program to provide hospitals with up to three months of Medicare payments in advance to help them invest in acquiring medical supplies and expand facilities to treat coronavirus patients. New York hospitals have used these dollars to add beds to intensive care units (ICUs), hire additional health care providers, and purchase personal protective equipment (PPE).

But the federal government is also

requiring that hospitals repay these advanced payments with added interest.

These hospitals are in the middle of fighting the coronavirus pandemic and do not have the financial resources to pay back these advance Medicare payments as mandated by the CARES Act.

"Our state's hospitals and health care workers are fighting day-in and day-out to help New Yorkers infected with coronavirus," said Rep. Engel. "New York hospitals, especially those in New York 16, have made significant investments to ensure they can provide this lifesaving care. At this critical time, the federal government should not be pulling the rug out from these safety-net facilities by requiring them to pay back the monetary support they've received with interest. I will continue work with my New York colleagues to urge Speaker Pelosi and Republican Leader McCarthy to forgive these advanced Medicare payments."

"The City of Yonkers has had the largest prevalence of COVID-19 cases in Westchester County. The cost of caring for these patients and ensuring the safety of our staff has been exorbitant, both emotionally and financially," said Ronald J Corti, Pres-

ident and CEO of St John's Riverside Hospital.

"I'd like to thank Congressman Eliot Engel, not only for his consistent support and advocacy of St. John's Riverside Hospital but also for his support and efforts to secure loan forgiveness in the Medicare advance payment program. St. John's was burdened with steep additional costs, including increasing surge capacity by 50%, bringing temporary staff on board, acquiring Personal Protective Equipment and ventilators, and providing crisis intervention counseling. At the same time, most of our outpatient business ceased. This policy is necessary for us to survive financially."

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency which operates Medicare, New York hospitals have received about \$6.5 billion in advance Medicare payments.

The New York delegation letter, led by Congressman Engel, sent a letter to Speaker Pelosi and Republican Leader McCarthy urging that they include provisions in the next stimulus package forgiving these payments so that hospitals have the financial support to continue treating New Yorkers infected with coronavirus.