CEO Update: Our work together to fight COVID-19

March 30, 2020

Thank you to everyone who participated in our advocacy efforts last week to include nonprofits in the $2.2 trillion emergency relief package (CARES Act). Over 600 of our member representatives sent nearly 1,150 messages to their Senators and Representatives at all hours of the day and night, calling for nonprofits to be included in the relief package. Several Senate offices specifically emphasized the value of messages they received from you. You should know that your voice and your actions truly made a big difference and that as a faith-based network, our voice matters. In addition, Bishop Eaton sent a letter to Congressional leaders last week that included our call for nonprofits to be included in the emergency relief package.

Given the importance of business continuity, we collectively fought hard for nonprofits to have access to the same funds as other businesses. Under the CARES Act, nonprofit organizations with under 500 employees are eligible for forgivable SBA loans and a $100 billion Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund was established for hospitals and nonprofits that provide diagnoses, testing or care for individuals with possible or actual cases of COVID-19. A high-level summary of key provisions in the Act is here. Critical to our ongoing advocacy is enabling nonprofits with over 500 employees to access forgivable loans (since they’re only eligible for 2% loans under the Act). In the coming days and weeks, we will be reaching out to you with more information and webinars with experts on how to access the funds.

We are also engaging national partners—health insurers, businesses and foundations—to support our members. Key areas we are working on are 1135 waivers, in particular, those states you have told us that are not using their full flexibility which limit your ability to respond to current needs (particularly related to telehealth and workforce issues). If you are interested in working on these issues, please contact Alesia Frerichs at afrerichs@lutheranservices.org

We all know there is strength in numbers and to effectively leverage the power of the network and show the impact of the great work you are doing on the front lines and the challenges your organization is facing, we are asking each organization to complete a survey to quantify the full magnitude of the impact you are having. We will use the aggregated data in ongoing advocacy and discussions with lawmakers, payers, technology vendors, grant funders and other partners. All of the individual information will be kept confidential. We’ve done our best to make this easy to complete – and you can skip over any questions that you can’t answer at this time. Please complete the survey by Friday, April 3rd. If you have any questions, please follow up with Alesia Frerichs with any questions.
We have compiled Coronavirus Resources on our website for your use. In addition, we are highlighting the innovation and ingenuity you are demonstrating in supporting your team and clients through our Frontline Heroes on our website. Visit it often to see what your colleagues are doing across the network. Please feel free to share your stories with Caitlyn Gudmundsen at cgudmundsen@lutheranservices.org

Finally, I wanted to share an Op Ed I did in the Morning Consult last week which is a national news, polling and data service that reaches 300,000 subscribers. I wrote the core message before the pandemic—but the pandemic only strengthens the case that reducing people’s health care not only hurts individuals, but their families, their communities and all of us. This was in response to CMS guidance to states around providing flexibility in exchange for a block grant or cap on the Medicaid expansion population.

A former member CEO recently reminded me that Lutheran social ministry has been a steady presence in communities through 28 recessions, the Great Depression, two World Wars, 22 presidencies, and 8 epidemics. Thank you for your incredible leadership, your courage and the sacrifices you are making to provide hope and healing to your team, your clients and your communities. Please let us know additional ways we can support you.

We are keeping you, your families, your team and the people you care for in our prayers.

Blessings,

Charlotte Haberaecker