

Support H.R. 5131/S. 2762, the Pediatric Access to Critical Health Care (PATCH) Act

Please co-sponsor [H.R. 5131/S. 2762](#), the **Pediatric Access to Critical Health Care (PATCH) Act**. The PATCH Act would provide \$6 billion over 10 years in dedicated funding for national pediatric preparedness response investments, including:

- Adding flexible critical care capacity
- Strengthening the workforce
- Providing support for telehealth technology and cybersecurity, particularly for high-Medicaid providers serving children with the greatest health disparities

Children's hospitals, the nation's health care safety net for all kids, are experiencing a surge in caseloads, greatly straining care capacity. Driving factors include:

- A significant increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in children in recent weeks
- An ongoing national children's mental health crisis that has intensified in the last year
- An atypical summer onset of RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) cycle with rising infection rates and severity expected through the fall

Flexible critical care capacity: Financial damage to children's hospitals from early in the pandemic has weakened the pediatric health care system, creating a significant national risk during any future public health emergency or unanticipated crisis. The result could threaten health outcomes for millions of children and families. Dedicated funding, combined with matching requirements, would bolster capacity enabling the replacement or addition of up to 4,000 beds across the country.

Strengthening the workforce: New investment would address pediatric workforce issues. Children's hospitals' professional staff require specialized training to care for infants and young children, where equipment, drug dosing, procedural preparation and patient/family communications are all very different from the care of adult patients. The combined COVID-19 and mental health crises have increased work stress and "burn out," already a major challenge to recruitment and retention.

Supporting telehealth technology and cybersecurity: The pandemic emergency has highlighted the importance of strong digital health infrastructure, including access to adequate, affordable broadband connectivity, as well as support for telehealth infrastructure. Ongoing cyber threats have revealed the critical need to build strong defenses to protect the privacy and safety of patients and their health information, and maintain access to high quality, safe and equitable health care.

Investment is needed to strengthen pediatric care capacity, or we will emerge from the pandemic with a weakened and less capable health care system for our nation's children.

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