



August 5, 2020

Director Kim Bimestefer
Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
1570 Grant Street
Denver, Colorado 80203

Director Bimestefer,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on next steps for the Hospital Transformation Program (HTP) in light of the current COVID-19 public health emergency. On behalf of the collective members of the Western Healthcare Alliance, Eastern Plains Healthcare Consortium, Colorado Hospital Association and Colorado Rural Health Center, we recommend a delay in the start of the program until six months after the public health emergency has officially ended. This reasonable timeline will allow our members to proactively participate in the program with meaningful community engagement.

During the call with our respective organizations on July 23, you heard twenty-three hospitals across the state share similar feedback about their struggles to meet the needs of their communities during a pandemic while maintaining all other regulatory and reporting requirements. You heard our leaders discuss the unrelenting pressure on providers and staff to provide patient-focused care while facing financial stress, workforce compassion fatigue and burnout, PPE shortages, increased testing requirements, the establishment of new safety protocols, and more.

We know this pandemic is far from over, as cases continue to increase across the state and a second wave is predicted to peak in mid-September. This second wave will be amplified by the upcoming flu season, school re-openings, loss of employer health benefits and an increase in Medicaid enrollment. HTP smartly and appropriately requires meaningful and sustained engagement with community partners, such as local public health agencies, consumers and advocacy groups, Regional Accountable Entities, Rural Health Centers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Community Mental Health Centers, schools and others. If HTP is not delayed,

collaboration with these partners will be significantly impaired, as these partners are similarly facing the time constraints and health and economic fallout from COVID-19.

While our members shared a myriad of reasons to justify a delayed start of the program, ultimately the most important reason is to focus their attention on quality patient care that meets the current needs of their community. As HTP shares a similar goal, we are hopeful that HCPF will accept our reasonable proposal for a delay of six months after the public health emergency has expired.

We would be happy to have another call or meet virtually to discuss further. Thank you for your consideration and continued partnership.

Respectfully,



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Colorado Rural Health Center



Chris Tholen, CEO
Colorado Hospital Association



Angelina Salazar, CEO
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To Whom It May Concern:

This is in regards to the Hospital Transformation Process (HTP), moving forward with HTP at this time puts a huge burden on Lincoln County Public Health (LCPH) in the midst of a pandemic. LCPH would like the opportunity to participate with HTP and be a community partner, but at this time we are limited in resources/time in our agency. We are using a lot of our time/effort addressing the pandemic of COVID-19. There is great concern that there is going to be an increase of cases this Fall and moving forward for the hospital, schools, and LPHA puts a burden on our agencies. This could result in not being able to participate and address the HTP like we would like to. It would be highly appreciated if moving forward with this would be held off for the time being.

Regards,

Jobeth Mills, BSN

Director

Lincoln County Public Health