



May 4, 2020

The Honorable Joe Neguse
1419 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kendra Horn
415 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Neguse and Horn:

The novel Coronavirus 2019 has reshaped many Americans' personal and professional lives and has led to unprecedented financial uncertainty for tens of millions. In response, Congress passed four laws to combat COVID-19 and provide relief for different sectors of the American economy, including small businesses and individuals that have been greatly impacted. Now Congress must continue this legislative effort and come together to give relief for those essential workers on the frontline who have shown true selflessness and heroism. These are the workers who stock grocery stores, who maintain critical infrastructure, and of course, who provide treatment and health care for those patients affected by COVID-19.

The American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT), the American College of Radiology (ACR), the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), the Society of Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging (SNMMI), the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR), the Association for Quality Imaging (AQI), are six organizations that represent the profession of radiology, including radiologic technologists and radiologist assistants, radiation therapists,

radiologists, radiation oncologists, and medical physicists. Together, we have nearly three hundred thousand members nationwide.

We applaud your efforts to secure hazard pay for critical frontline health care workers by introducing H.R. 6484, the Hazard Pay for the Frontlines During Health Emergencies Act.¹ H.R. 6484 creates a framework of an additional 25 percent of a covered health care employee's salary as hazard pay during public emergencies, and includes 100 percent federal reimbursement for these expenses. This is exactly the kind of legislation that Congress should look at that pays special attention to these essential health care workers by assisting them if they have incurred additional costs during the pandemic due to childcare, senior care, or protective measures to keep their families safe. It is vital that this framework be included in any COVID-19 response legislation that Congress next debates.

In any definition of a covered employee capable of receiving the aforementioned hazard pay, it needs to be as inclusive as possible with pay coverage for **all** essential employees. As this should surely be congressional intent, we note that H.R. 6484 excludes radiation therapists from receiving hazard pay as a covered employee. Radiation therapists are essential frontline health care workers who work in the field of radiation oncology. Oncologic care has been greatly impacted by the pandemic given the even greater threat imposed to immunosuppressed cancer patients. Cancer care is in the middle of an intersection between the desire to safeguard a vulnerable patient population from COVID-19 while providing the cancer patient the necessary treatment. As you may know, 50 percent of cancer patients receive radiation therapy as part of their treatment.

In a recent study, researchers used data from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics to rank occupations at highest risk to COVID-19. The study gives radiation therapists a risk score of 92.4, one of the highest risk scores out of any profession referenced in the study.² Researchers concluded that radiation therapists have a higher risk score than registered nurses (86.1), respiratory therapists (84.2), licensed practical nurses (82.1), and critical care nurses (81.7). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has classified radiation therapists as members of the essential critical infrastructure workforce.

Radiation therapists, like dozens of other health care professionals, are tirelessly putting their lives on the line to protect others during this pandemic. In their case, their contribution is to continue to provide radiation therapy treatments for COVID-19 patients. As such, we urge that when discussing H.R. 6484 with House Leadership for inclusion in any COVID-19 response bill, not to leave out these professionals. Their efforts can, and should, be recognized by the Federal Government.

We thank you for recognizing the efforts of health care professionals during this time and look forward to working with you as you work toward a federal hazard pay framework.

¹ H.R. 6484, the Hazard Pay for the Frontlines During Health Emergencies Act, 116th. Cong., 2020.

² See Marcus Lu, *The Front Line: Visualizing the Occupations with the Highest COVID-19 Risk*, April 15, 2020, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-front-line-visualizing-the-occupations-with-the-highest-covid-19-risk/>.

Sincerely,

The American Society of Radiologic Technologists

The American College of Radiology

The American Society for Radiation Oncology

The Society of Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging

The Society of Interventional Radiology

The Association for Quality Imaging