

KATIE PORTER
45TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INVESTOR PROTECTION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
AND CAPITAL MARKETS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND
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May 6, 2020

Mr. Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

I appreciate your leadership to quickly administer the \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth grant program created in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As you know, that funding is intended to immediately support health care providers responding to the pandemic by delivering telehealth services. The grants may be used to purchase telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to enable the provision of telehealth services during this emergency period. I am writing in support of the application made by the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics (Coalition OC) for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program (WC Docket No. 20-89).

The Coalition OC serves a diverse membership of 25 independent 501(c)(3) non-profit health center organizations with 68 sites throughout Orange County. Through their membership's primary care safety net, they serve over 350,000 patients annually and have a commitment to providing quality culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services to all. If awarded the funds from this grant, the Coalition OC will be able to support healthcare providers in the fight against COVID-19 through the use of remote device monitoring of their vulnerable diabetic population who are at far higher risk of the most severe consequences of contracting COVID-19. The use of this technology can greatly reduce transmission of the virus between these high risk patients and protect healthcare workers from unnecessary exposure.

In Orange County, 1 in every 10 patients receive health care services at a community health center (CHC), with over 1 million patient encounters per year. During a public health emergency, health centers provide triage, treatment, referrals and also work in partnership with the local health departments and the state of California. This crisis is no different. CHCs are uniquely positioned to assist in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 as they are deeply rooted in the communities they serve and are trusted sources of care for anyone that walks through their doors.

However, CHCs, like so many other providers are financially strained as they transition their organizations to rapidly respond to the need for screening and testing of COVID-19 patients, while also continuing to address the additional needs of the vulnerable patients they serve. Health center leaders are making decisions in real time as public health directives and community, city, and state mitigation efforts have led to the curtailing of non-urgent services and sites, causing revenues to plummet precipitously. As such, this project could have an immediate impact on healthcare providers and their patients as well as mitigate the strain on our now overloaded healthcare system.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you give strong consideration to the application submitted by the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics to better enable them to provide advanced healthcare to our communities during this pandemic health crisis. If you have any questions, or need additional information about the Coalition OC, their members, or their application, please feel free to contact Mr. Mike Matull, Project Director – OCPH HCCN, at the Coalition OC at matull@coalitionoc.org or 951-795-3803.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this request, and for your support of our providers during this crisis.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katie Porter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Katie" and last name "Porter" clearly distinguishable.

KATIE PORTER
Member of Congress