COVID-19 POLICY UPDATE: U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTINUES RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

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EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL

This week, Congress passed an $8.3 billion emergency funding measure (H.R. 6074) to combat the coronavirus. Although the package is above the $2.5 billion initially requested by the Trump Administration, the President signed the legislation on Friday morning.

Specifically, H.R. 6074 provides funding to a number of agencies in order to "fully fund a robust response to coronavirus, including vaccine development, support for state and local governments, and assistance for affected small businesses," according to a U.S. House Committee on Appropriations press release, which is available here.

CONTINUED CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

In addition to the passage of the emergency funding bill, various committees have been exploring responses to and impacts from the coronavirus. On March 5, the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space and Technology held a hearing on the spread of infectious diseases and mobilizing solutions. The U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs also held a hearing on March 5 on the Administration's response to the coronavirus and preparing for future global pandemics. Finally, the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations held a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request for the Department of Education, where Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) called on Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to outline the department's coronavirus preparedness.

AGENCY ACTION

Various federal agencies have also been examining and releasing guidance on the coronavirus. The Securities and Exchange Commission announced that it would give publicly traded companies additional time to meet certain obligations under federal securities laws, acknowledging the "potential compliance issues" that the coronavirus could present. In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency issued guidance on antimicrobial products for use against the coronavirus.

Moreover, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ("CMS") issued guidance for hospitals and nursing homes for infection control and prevention regarding the coronavirus, as well as considerations for patient triage and discharge. The guidance came after U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means Chair Richard Neal (D-MA) and Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-WA) expressed concern about the outbreak in a nursing home in Washington,

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requesting in a letter to CMS more information on its response to the coronavirus. Rep. Neal and U.S. Senate Committee on Finance Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) wrote again to CMS on March 5 seeking additional information from CMS.

CONCLUSION

Policymakers will continue to monitor developments both domestically and internationally, including ongoing hearings and potential information requests from businesses and other stakeholders, as they navigate challenges presented by the coronavirus. Additionally, we anticipate policymakers will continue to engage in efforts to provide guidance to businesses and stakeholders as they consider a range of issues impacting emergency preparedness, travel, the workforce, supply chain, and the economy more generally. To the extent the virus spreads more significantly throughout the United States, we expect that Congress, where possible, will be evaluating options and implementing policies aimed at mitigating health and economic impacts. We will continue to provide timely updates on these developments and are available to assist clients as they navigate policy issues around the coronavirus.

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