Mills Administration Announces New Grants for Maine Health Care Organizations

November 30, 2020

Hospitals, nursing facilities and other providers serving MaineCare members may apply beginning tomorrow for up to $30M in relief funds

AUGUSTA - Governor Janet Mills and Health and Human Services Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew announced today a grant program to support health care organizations that serve residents with MaineCare and sustain vital health services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Backed by $30 million in Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF), the Maine Health Care Financial Relief Program is a new opportunity modeled on the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development's (DECD) Maine Economic Recovery Grant program.

Beginning tomorrow, health care organizations that were ineligible for funding under the Maine Economic Recovery Grant program may apply for the new grants. These include hospitals and nursing facilities of any size, as well as congregate care, behavioral health, community service providers, and other providers with more than 250 employees. Health care organizations must have served MaineCare members in 2020 to qualify. The new grants will provide up to $100,000 in financial relief for health care organizations that have incurred business disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. DECD will administer the grant program in coordination with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

"Our health care providers, and the heroic workers they employ, have shouldered an enormous burden this year," **said Governor Mills**. "These funds, although not nearly enough to make up for their losses, will help bolster our providers at this critical time and allow them to continue providing care to Maine people. At the same time, I urge Congress to do its part to step up and provide additional relief."

"Maine's health care providers have risen to countless challenges throughout the pandemic, from caring for those directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19, to protecting their workforces, to partnering with DHHS to expand free testing," **said Jeanne Lambrew, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services**. "This new grant opportunity offers additional, immediate relief to providers of vital health care, but we urge Congress to step up to provide sufficient, ongoing support for the people and the State of Maine."

"This collaborative effort between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Economic and Community Development will provide additional funding to Maine health care providers, though the need is far greater," **said Heather Johnson, Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development**. "I applaud health care providers around the state for their tireless efforts to keep Maine people alive, safe, and healthy."

Application materials and further information will be available later today on the DECD website. The application portal for the program will open tomorrow, Tuesday, December 1, 2020 at noon on DECD's website. The deadline to apply is December 10, 2020. Awards are expected to be distributed prior to the end of the month. The award amount will be based on demonstrated need, accounting for other sources of funding providers have accessed to offset revenue losses related to the pandemic.

As with the Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program, the Maine Health Care Financial Relief grants may be used to cover expenses including: payroll costs and expenses; rent or mortgage payments for business facilities; utilities payments; necessary operating expenses; expenses incurred to replenish inventory or other necessary re-opening expenses; purchase of personal protective equipment required by the business or business-related equipment. Funds must be spent on operations strictly within Maine. Recipients are liable for any misuse of funds, and the grants are subject to audit.

"Nursing facilities continue to be at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic," **said Rick Erb, president and CEO of the Maine Health Care Association**. "There are extreme expenses associated with this ongoing effort, including staffing, PPE procurement, and testing. MHCA is pleased to see these grants targeted for nursing facilities and appreciate that this relief can be customized to meet the varying needs of individual homes. We thank the Mills Administration for supporting the important role our state's nursing

homes serve in caring for residents and are hopeful that these grants will help our homes remain viable as we head into the tenth month of this public health emergency."

The new grants build on DHHS' increased financial support to MaineCare providers in response to the pandemic. DHHS has provided more than $57 million in State and Federal funds to MaineCare providers as direct assistance, including supplemental payments to hospitals, temporary rate increases for nursing facilities and other congregate care providers, incentive payments for child and behavioral health providers, and acceleration of prior planned rate increases. The State has also provided considerable COVID-19 testing support to providers, particularly for Nursing Facilities and other congregate care settings, through use of the Health and Environmental Testing Lab (HETL) and through direct reimbursement, as announced earlier this month (//www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=DHS+Press+Releases&id=3645763&v=dhhs_article_2020) .

Maine health care providers have also received direct support from the Federal government's coronavirus Provider Relief Fund. Additionally, some health care providers were eligible for previous rounds of DECD's Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program, which in total provided $158.6 million to 3,551 businesses and non-profits.

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