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March 12, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Potential Aid for Industries Impacted by Coronavirus

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy and Schumer:

I write regarding prospective federal intervention to support the airline, travel and other targeted industries impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. The Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM) urges you to include associations, nonprofits and other tax-exempt organizations within any federal aid packages or supplemental appropriations measures, as many have been and will be harmed by event cancellations and reduced meeting attendance as a result of COVID-19. As a national medical specialty society of primary care doctors, many of our members are on the front lines of helping to treat patients and manage the COVID-19 outbreak. Their need to stay home puts our educational meetings at risk.

According to the Events Industry Council's 2018 Economic Significance Study conducted by Oxford Economics¹, more than 1.9 million meetings occur in the United States each year – with more than 250 million attendees. These meetings contribute more than \$446 billion to U.S. gross domestic product and directly support 5.9 million jobs nationwide.

As you are no doubt aware, the fast-spreading COVID-19 epidemic has prompted the cancellation of dozens of major meetings and events in the U.S. and forced other event sponsors to consider cancelling or postponing innumerable additional events dependent on in-person attendance at convention centers, hotels and other event facilities. Many of these meetings and events also attract international participants, who generate 11.5 percent (about \$38 billion) of direct spending during their visits to the U.S. International travel to the U.S. has dropped sharply during the COVID-19 outbreak and signs point to this trend growing until the virus is brought under control. The U.S. Travel Association forecasts international flights to the U.S. will plummet

¹ Events Industry Council. Economic Significance of Meetings to the US Economy. February 2018. <https://dev-meetingsmeanbusiness.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/Economic%20Significance%20of%20Meetings%20to%20the%20US%20Economy.pdf>



six percent over the next three months alone, which would be the largest decline since the 2008 economic crisis.

Additionally, many associations operate similarly to small businesses and are greatly impacted if employees are forced to take sick leave or are quarantined as a result of COVID-19 interaction. We are aware the Trump Administration and Congress are considering measures for small businesses that may require cash flow assistance amid the outbreak, and **urge that tax-exempt entities like the Society of General Internal Medicine be included in any temporary aid designed to stem the economic fallout resulting from COVID-19.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric B. Bass". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric B. Bass, MD, MPH, FACP
Chief Executive Officer
Society of General Internal Medicine