



September 15, 2020

The Honorable Robert P. Casey Jr.  
393 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans have been asked to step up and do their part to help flatten the curve. Whether their efforts involved wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, or staying home to help stop the spread of the virus, people from all walks of life have stepped up to do their part. We have seen one group go above and beyond the call of duty in helping to keep Americans safe from this invisible enemy. Our nation's healthcare workers have been put on the front lines and like you we agree they should be rewarded for their bravery.

We believe your bill, S. 3763, the Pandemic Responder Service Award Act, is an important piece of legislation providing some relief and benefits for our nation's healthcare workers for their service during this trying time. We feel that we owe healthcare workers a debt of gratitude and some of the provisions included in your bill are a good way to do so. With that being said, the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Healthcare Committee does have some concerns regarding some of the provisions in this bill and would like to offer some suggested changes. We believe these changes would enhance the bill and allow it to help more people.

The first provision the Committee would like to see changed would be moving the grant award from \$10,000 a year for four years, to a one-time grant. We believe that \$10,000 a year for four years is excessive and the criteria of what the money can be used for should be narrowed down. Specifically, starting a business should not be included as an eligible expense given the current circumstances. We have seen the federal government spending hundreds of billions of dollars over the course of the pandemic on trying to keep businesses open due to COVID-19. We do not feel this provision makes fiscal sense and may only add to problems in the future.

The second provision that we would like to see included would be an income limit on those who qualify for the grant. Many of the individuals who would qualify for this grant under your bill were still earning an income throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. While many people in the United States have had to close their businesses and millions have been furloughed or left jobless due to COVID-19, we believe it is good practice to make sure that we are allocating those resources to those who need it most rather than to giving grants to individuals who may be well off. The Committee encourages the inclusion of an income limit similar to what was included in the CARES Act for the Paycheck Protection Program.

As the Healthcare Committee researches legislation to consider supporting, the Pandemic Responder Service Award Act is high on the list of bills the committee would like to formally endorse. After a full committee discussion, we have determined that to do so we would like to see the changes noted above included in your legislation. We fully understand all of the moving parts that go along with drafting and introducing legislation and would appreciate your consideration of our request.

The Chamber's Healthcare Committee strongly encourages you to consider our request. Thank you for taking the time to review it. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at [bbloss@rbaccountants.com](mailto:bbloss@rbaccountants.com) or contact the Chamber's Healthcare Committee Liaison, Matt Powell, at [mattp@lehighvalleychamber.org](mailto:mattp@lehighvalleychamber.org).

Sincerely,

*William E. Bloss*

William E. Bloss  
Chair, Healthcare Committee  
Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce