



The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
United State Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 8, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer and McCarthy:

As Congress continues its work to respond to the novel coronavirus pandemic, I am writing on behalf of the Heart Rhythm Society (HRS) to urge you to address in the next COVID-19 legislative response the challenges faced by the medical research community during this crisis.

HRS represents more than 7,000 specialists in cardiac pacing and electrophysiology, consisting of physicians, scientists and their support personnel. Electrophysiology is a distinct specialty of cardiology, with eligibility for board certification in clinical cardiac electrophysiology through the American Board of Internal Medicine, as well as in cardiology.

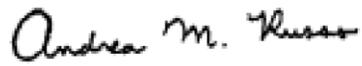
Our members are essential to the health ecosystem. Over 40 percent of heart disease encounters are due to life threatening arrhythmias, sudden death or atrial fibrillation. Indeed, 17 percent of COVID-19 patients show such conditions which are a common cause of death in this pandemic.

We fully appreciate the urgency of dealing with the general COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are extremely concerned that most non-COVID-19 related research has been stalled or stopped as a result. This is already placing at risk the medical research workforce who are essential to protecting public health and advancing medical innovation. We have already seen concerning falls in admissions for stroke, sudden death and heart attack during the pandemic. We are also worried that urgently needed discoveries and treatments for these conditions may be overlooked and thus underfunded in future discussions.

HRS requests \$26 billion that would be used to fund and cover supplements for research grants and contracts due to COVID-19 related impacts, provide emergency relief to sustain research support personnel and base operating costs for core research facilities and user-funded research services until such time facilities reopen and research activities return to pre-pandemic activity levels, as well as fund additional graduate student and postdoc fellowships, traineeships, and research assistantships for up to two years. HRS wholeheartedly supports the bipartisan request made by Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Representative Fred Upton (R-MI) in their April 29 letter to House leadership regarding the fourth relief package. As Representatives DeGette and Upton recognize, it is critical that Congress preserve the current medical research workforce and maintain our nation's global scientific leadership beyond this current crisis.

For questions regarding this letter, please contact Laura Blum, Heart Rhythm Society's Vice President for Provider and Patient Advocacy at [lblum@hrsonline.org](mailto:lblum@hrsonline.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea M. Russo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Andrea M. Russo, MD, FHRS  
President