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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

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March 16, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express the urgent need to resolve the mounting problems being raised by the nation's frontline care givers with respect to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The AMA continues to hear from physicians across the country about short supplies and limited access to personal protective equipment (PPE), which is necessary to keep the health care workforce safe and to protect the health of patients. Physicians are reaching out to their state and local health departments, but their supplies of PPE are also inadequate. We have also been in touch with the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and were informed that there is limited PPE available in the strategic national stockpile (SNS), and that it will not be able to meet the needs of our nation's health workforce.

The AMA is also deeply concerned about reports of short supply of components required for SARS-CoV-2 diagnostics. Reports from our physicians and our laboratory colleagues are that essential testing components such as reagents used in RNA extraction, are in severe shortage. Shortages of these essential supplies are forcing physicians to severely restrict access to testing services, with significant concern that they will no longer be able to offer testing in the near future.

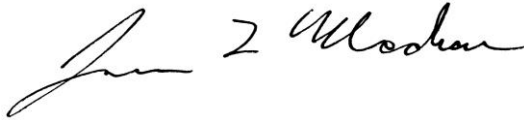
While we know that efforts are underway to increase the production of PPE and components required for testing, we are concerned that this is not happening quickly enough. We strongly urge you to strengthen these efforts and, as suggested by the president of Massachusetts General Hospital over the weekend, undertake a "Manhattan Project" type effort to expand manufacturing capacity and produce the supplies needed to ensure the health security of our country during this national emergency. Physicians on the frontlines are currently prioritizing PPE such as N95 respirators for those procedures that are at high risk for spreading COVID-19. Even regular surgical masks and gowns are reportedly in short supply. The Administration's effort to increase access to testing will be critically hampered if there is a reagent shortage.

The AMA has been working closely with various agencies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and we want to continue to help share information and work on constructive solutions to the health threats facing our nation. Addressing the critical shortages is part of this effort.

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The AMA appreciates your leadership and stands ready to work with you to address this unprecedented public health threat. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Margaret Garikes, Vice President of Federal Affairs, at margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org or 202-789-7409.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James L. Madara, MD