

May 28, 2020

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

Dear Vice President Pence:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA) I am writing to express our ongoing concern over the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE). Access to infection control supplies, including PPE, disinfectant, and hand sanitizer has been a significant challenge for physicians treating COVID-19 patients and we want to ensure that the extreme shortages faced by front-line providers during the initial COVID-19 surges will not recur. Equally important, we want to ensure that this challenge does not spread to non-hospital physician practices as these practices begin to reopen for elective procedures and non-urgent care.

The AMA has been working closely with various arms of the Administration to address the myriad of challenges that COVID-19 has presented to both physician and patients. Pursuant to the federal government's guidance, as well as mandates at the state level, many physician practices have been shuttered to non-essential services and procedures. As a result, while many physicians have been able to continue to see patients remotely via telemedicine, physical practice locations have been closed for several weeks due to the ongoing threat of infection. However, many states are beginning to lift restrictions on elective procedures and non-urgent appointments, meaning that physicians across all specialties and disciplines will soon be seeing patients in person. While it is critical to the long-term viability of these practices to return to seeing patients in person, the serious threat of COVID-19 infection persists and it is essential that physicians and their staff institute proper infection control procedures in their practices.

We understand that PPE and other critical infection control supplies have been directed towards COVID-19 hotspots and to facilities treating COVID-19 patients, and we have supported the Administration's efforts to send supplies where they are most needed. However, as non-hospital physicians return to work and reopen practices, the need for these supplies is rapidly expanding to these other care sites. Given continued strains on the supply chain for these products, they are not readily available from the usual sources our physicians use. We are hearing significant and growing concern from our member physicians that they cannot secure needed supplies to safely reopen and that they are unsure where to turn for further guidance and assistance. As such, **we urge the Administration to work with us to provide additional assistance to these non-hospital physicians in securing PPE, disinfectants, and sanitizers.** This assistance may include providing points-of-contact within each state or locality that can provide guidance to physicians as to where to secure these items, listings of legitimate manufacturers or suppliers that may be able to supply to physician practices, or dedicating additional federal infection control resources to help supply these providers. These actions could be accomplished through the creation of a clearinghouse

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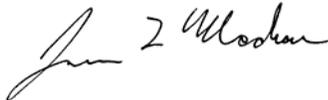
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on a regional, state, or local level to provide such information to providers in one easy-to-access location. The AMA is happy to use our Federation of specialty and state medical societies to amplify this information.

As physician practices move towards reopening and providing critical medical services to patients across America, it is essential to keep physicians, medical staff, and patients safe from potential infection. Infection within a physician practice runs the risk of not only spreading COVID-19 to additional staff and patients, but further threatening the long-term financial viability of practices already under significant strain after extended closures. **The sustainability of these practices is critical not only to addressing the pandemic but to the future health of the nation. Adequate infection control resources for these practices is essential in minimizing risks to physicians, patients, and staff.**

The AMA looks forward to working with you to address this important issue and would like to engage in further discussion about how best to keep our physicians, medical staff, and patients safe. For additional discussion or for questions, please contact Shannon Curtis, Assistant Director of Federal Affairs, at shannon.curtis@ama-assn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD