

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Peter Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

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), specifically for clinicians in office-based settings. We understand that PPE and other critical infection control supplies have been directed towards COVID-19 hotspots and to facilities treating infected patients, and we have supported the Administration's efforts to send supplies where they are most needed. **However, as non-hospital-based physicians return to work and reopen their practices, the need for these supplies is rapidly expanding to other care sites.**

The AMA has been working closely with various arms of the Administration to address the challenges that COVID-19 has presented to both physicians 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 medical 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 or longer due to the ongoing threat of infection.

As states lift restrictions on elective procedures and non-urgent appointments, physicians across all specialties and disciplines are beginning to see patients in person. While it is critical to the long-term viability of these practices to resume office visits, the serious threat of COVID-19 infection persists and it is essential that physicians and their staff institute proper infection control protocols and procedures in their practices. However, strains on the supply chain for PPE and disinfectant products continue, and they simply are not readily available from the usual sources our physicians use. Furthermore, the sources that are available are reportedly fulfilling only very large, institution-sized orders. 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.

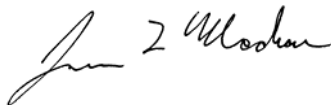
The AMA has raised these concerns with Congress, the White House, and a number of federal agencies, but a remedy remains elusive. **A significant obstacle to crafting effective solutions has been the lack of data to help us ascertain whether the central problem is in the availability of raw material, production backlogs, gaps in the distribution systems, or some combination of all three.** In fact, a recent [report](#) from the White House COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security provided helpful information on current and anticipated availability of critical supplies (N95 masks, surgical masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves) to various facilities (hospitals, long-term care facilities, labs, and correctional facilities) as well as first responders and non-health care

staff such as janitorial services, but no information was provided on access for ambulatory care sites such as physician offices. It seems like there are no federal or state agencies monitoring or working to resolve this problem.

We urge FEMA to work with us to provide additional assistance to these non-hospital physicians in securing PPE, disinfectants, and sanitizers. The AMA suggests collection and dissemination of data and supply chain information as a good starting point in helping to address concerns. In addition, assistance to physician practices 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 on a regional, state, or local level to provide such information to providers in one easy-to-access location. The AMA is happy to coordinate with 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. 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. Please contact Margaret Garikes, Vice President, Federal Affairs, at margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org or 202-789-7409 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

James L. Madara, MD