

June 30, 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 Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association, I am writing to urge the administration to utilize the Defense Production Act to make sure there is sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for physicians in all settings. In late March, physicians significantly scaled back providing non-emergent medical services and procedures in order to prevent exposure to SARS CoV-2 to patients and physicians. Physician practices are now in the process of reopening across the country, which is both critical for the health of our patients as well as the financial viability of these small businesses. The scaling back of services and procedures over the past few months has caused many patients to delay care for a host of health issues, including those with chronic conditions that require regular management in consultation with a physician. We need to make sure that we get the nation's physicians back to work to provide our patients the care they need in a timely fashion.

As the AMA continues to communicate with physicians during the pandemic, they tell us the biggest challenge to reopening their practices is the ongoing shortages of PPE, especially N95 masks and gowns. Previously, physicians in ambulatory settings have not needed substantial PPE. Consequently, physicians in ambulatory settings do not have existing relationships with vendors or ability to source these critical items. Furthermore, physician offices do not need the same quantity of PPE that large institutions do. As a result, even when physicians find a vendor with available supply, they end up losing to larger institutions that have more bargaining power and can place more substantial orders. PPE is needed for all types of health care sites, including ambulatory settings. We need to ensure the safety of patients, physicians and their staff.

Without adequate PPE, physician practices may have to continue deferring care or remain closed, which will continue to have a dramatic impact on the health of their patients. Furthermore, the ability to access PPE will help determine the future viability of physician practices. Recent survey and claims analyses suggest that physician practice revenue decreased at least 50 percent between March 2020 and May 2020,<sup>1</sup> which translates to a \$70.6 billion reduction in revenue. This is a challenge for any small business to absorb. For the sake of our patients' health and to ensure we do not drastically reduce the number of sites available to provide healthcare services, we need to make sure practices remain open and able to provide care. Physician practices should be the first line of defense in caring for patients. Delayed care

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<sup>1</sup> [Fair Health, Healthcare Professionals and the Impact of COVID-19](#); [MGMA, COVID-19 Financial Impact on Medical Practices](#); [AMGA, Surveys of Financial Impact of COVID-19](#); [Primary Care Collaborative, Primary Care & COVID-19: Surveys](#).

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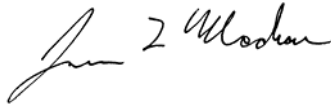
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often means sicker patients. We do not want patients to unnecessarily end up in a hospital when they could have been effectively cared for by their personal physician. Furthermore, closure of practices would have a long-term negative impact on access to care, especially for those patients in underserved areas that do not have ready access to a choice of physician practices.

The AMA understands and supports the initial focus of the administration on supplying institutions, such as hospitals and nursing homes, with PPE, but we need the administration's help to ensure that physician practices also have the PPE. The AMA has previously called for the administration to provide transparency and assistance regarding distribution. We still believe those actions would be incredibly helpful. However, the **AMA now believes the situation with PPE in ambulatory settings is so challenging that the only way to address it is for the administration to use the Defense Production Act (DPA) so the much needed N95 masks and gowns are available so patients, physicians and their staffs can safely treat as many patients as possible.**

For the health of patients, physicians, and staff, as well as the future sustainability of these practices, the federal government must do more to help navigate the challenges of securing PPE. The AMA looks forward to working with you to solve these critical issues. For follow-up please have your staff reach out to Shannon Curtis, Assistant Director, Federal Affairs at [shannon.curtis@ama-assn.org](mailto:shannon.curtis@ama-assn.org).

Sincerely,

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

James L. Madara, MD