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March 21, 2020

Governor J.B. Pritzker
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker:

On behalf of the Illinois Dental Hygienists' Association (IDHA), I want to thank you for your leadership in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and applaud you for your ongoing work to provide the people of Illinois and economy with support and relief during these uncertain and unprecedented times.

Dental hygienists are licensed primary care oral health professionals and members of the oral health care team who focus on preventing oral disease and identifying and treating oral disease. Dental hygienists administer a range of oral health services including prophylaxis, sealants, fluoride treatments, oral health education, oral cancer screenings, and oral health education, among other services.

On March 18, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued recommendations on elective surgery and procedures; these recommendations are particularly strong with respect to dental procedures. Indeed, dental procedures are afforded particular emphasis. The CMS recommendations caution that: ***“Dental procedures use PPE [personal protective equipment] and have one of the highest risks of transmission due to the close proximity of the healthcare provider to the patient. To reduce the risk of spread and to preserve PPE, we are recommending that all non-essential dental exams and procedures be postponed until further notice.”***

Within the current “stay at home” mandate, Executive Order 2020-10, that passed on March 20, item 7: Healthcare and Public Operations, dental offices are listed as an inclusion for essential services. This directly conflicts with not only the CMS recommendations, but also the recommendations released by your office at today’s (March 21) press briefing. The Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike, stated ***“To maximize the State’s availability of this PPE, IDPH released guidance to limit non-essential adult elective surgery and other medical and surgical procedures, including dental procedures, until further notice.”***

IDHA requests, and urges your office to mandate dental offices be open for emergency procedures only to not only protect those employees within the office, but to protect the public and also preserve supply of necessary PPE for the frontline healthcare workers dealing with this pandemic. Dental offices have remained open despite the suggestions of the Government to temporarily close down for non-essential procedures. Suggestions and guidance have not been enough to initiate the necessary response, the dental community needs a **mandate** from the office of the Governor. ***CDC guidance notes “if not***

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clinically urgent, dental health care personnel should consider postponing non-emergency or elective dental procedures in patients who have signs or symptoms of respiratory illness. "

As licensed dental hygienists, we are urging you to take action to protect public health by limiting dental procedures to emergency services. The citizens of our state are depending on your leadership. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are urging you to limit dental services except for providing emergency care.

Thank you for your consideration of IDHA's views, and again for the important leadership role you are playing during this crisis. We would be pleased to provide additional information or answer questions regarding IDHA's position. Do not hesitate to contact IDHA Interim Legislative Committee Chairman Monica Baldwin (monicabaldwinrdh@gmail.com) or IDHA Immediate Past President Laura Scully (lms1507@sbcglobal.net) as well as myself.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Bosecker, BSN, RDH
President
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