

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human
Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

On behalf of our collective dental organizations, we are writing to thank you for your strong support of dentists across the country during this public health emergency. We are requesting immediate financial assistance for dentists who are only providing care for patients with urgent needs. Dentists are taking on significant financial risk due to postponing non-essential procedures and visits during this crisis.

Dentists were some of the first to recommend a postponement of all elective procedures at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, dentists are only seeing patients for emergencies in order to slow community spread, preserve medical supplies, and alleviate emergency departments as much as possible from the burden of caring for dental emergencies, rather than patients with COVID-19. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has classified dental health care personnel in the **very high exposure risk** category¹ and the ability to fully reopen dental practices is contingent on the ability to completely control the coronavirus pandemic in a relatively short period of time. Dentists across the country continue to navigate the unique challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic while growing more alarmed that their practices are risking solvency issues as they try to remain open for emergencies but have less and less access to capital. Even with Small Business Administration (SBA) loans coming online, the delays in processing are requiring dentists to make long-term business decisions about keeping employees on payroll and whether they will ever be able to open again.

We strongly recommend that HHS provide immediate access to capital by **releasing funding from the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund to dentists that are Medicaid providers**. After releasing \$30 billion in Medicare payments to health care providers last week, dentists who are Medicaid providers should also be made eligible for payments in the next round of payments. These payments would help dentists who provide a critical access point for oral health care to many lower income Americans. To remain sustainable in the long-term, these dentists need funding immediately.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Infection Control – Dental Settings](#), April 2020.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you in more detail and answer any questions you have regarding these comments. Please contact David Linn at linnd@ada.org or (202) 789-5170 to facilitate further discussions.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association
Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Dental Group Practice
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Association of Endodontists
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Women Dentists
American College of Prosthodontists
American Dental Education Association
American Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists
American Student Dental Association
National Dental Association

Alabama Dental Association
Alaska Dental Society
Arkansas State Dental Association
California Dental Association
Colorado Dental Association
Connecticut State Dental Association
Florida Dental Association
Hawaii Dental Association
Indiana Dental Association
Iowa Dental Association
Kentucky Dental Association
Maryland State Dental Association
Massachusetts Dental Society
Minnesota Dental Association
Mississippi Dental Association
Missouri Dental Association
Montana Dental Association
New Hampshire Dental Society
New Jersey Dental Association
New Mexico Dental Association
North Dakota Dental Association
Ohio Dental Association
Oklahoma Dental Association

Oregon Dental Association
Pennsylvania Dental Association
South Carolina Dental Association
South Dakota Dental Association
Tennessee Dental Association
Texas Dental Association
Vermont State Dental Society
Virginia Dental Association
Washington State Dental Association
West Virginia Dental Association
Wisconsin Dental Association