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Honorable Governor Tom Wolf  
225 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg PA, 17120

April 20, 2020

Dear Governor Wolf,

As you have acknowledged, physicians and other health care providers are putting themselves at risk to continue to serve Pennsylvanians' medical needs. These providers are not just addressing COVID-19, they are treating chronic conditions and emergency needs. It will come as no surprise to you that the longer physicians and practices in our Commonwealth continue to serve patients during this pandemic, the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) will continue to grow.

We applaud your efforts to support health care facilities and front-line workers. However, health care providers treating patients with chronic conditions and acute illness are not being helped. These private practitioners are keeping patients away from emergency departments so that health systems can effectively treat COVID-19 patients, yet they cannot obtain PPEs. Daily we are hearing of practices closing or indicating that they are within days of ceasing life sustaining care and treatments. Without help from private practitioners, patients will have no choice but to go to hospitals for care. At a time when Pennsylvania is near peak levels of COVID-19 cases, emergency departments and health systems do not need additional patients. Furthermore, these health-compromised patients do not, and should not, endure potential exposure risks with COVID-19 patients.

Therefore, we are reaching out to ask that a percentage of the available the PPE stockpile be apportioned to providers who are providing life sustaining care in private practices. We also ask that any PPE purchased by the Commonwealth include a percentage that would go to these practitioners. We ask that PPE be made available to those providing life sustaining care.

Often, both you and the Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, speak of preparing for the surge of COVID-19 infected patients by conserving – and adding additional – hospital resources.

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Physician offices and walk-in clinics are critical components of the preparation effort. Their essential services of triaging and caring for some patients, ultimately keeps less- sick patients out of the hospital altogether. These offices need adequate PPE. They must protect their healthcare workers in the same manner as hospitals and health systems. PAMED is hearing from their members that they are either seeing patients with limited protective coverings or are a week or days away from having no PPE. Some of our members have closed their offices because they cannot ensure the safety of their staff and patients due to lack of PPE.

Governor Wolf, please allow physicians and their practices to help you keep hospital beds and ventilators open for those who most need it by setting aside a percentage of PPE specifically for physician offices providing life sustaining care in our Pennsylvania communities. Their role in providing care for patients before they ever make it to the hospital is vital. This strategy is right for hospitals, private practices, and most importantly the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,



Lawrence John, MD  
President