



Virginia Dental
ASSOCIATION



April 27, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam,

The Virginia Dental Association wishes to thank you for your administration's efforts to mitigate the profound impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on Virginians.

To assist in this effort, on March 16, the dental profession was among the first national health care provider groups to recommend postponement of elective procedures and treat only urgent and emergency cases. This contributed to slowing community spread of the virus and preserving much needed personal protective equipment (PPE). Equally important, remaining open for emergency procedures helped alleviate emergency departments from having to manage dental emergencies.

As non-emergency dental cases have been delayed these many weeks, some may now be reaching a critical point where they need to be addressed in the dental office. For example, an untreated dental abscess can develop into a body-wide infection that jeopardizes a patient's life. Dentists are best positioned and should be empowered to treat conditions such as this. Most patients that a dentist needs to see have the potential to be asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Dentists and their staff are at very high risk of infection, since many dental procedures produce aerosols in the normal course of treatment. In order to treat patients in the safest manner, dentists will need access to the appropriate PPE to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission among patients and dental team members.

It is of critical importance for our dentists to have an adequate supply of N95 masks to treat these patients. Currently, many dentists do not have enough N95 masks to treat their emergency cases, let alone providing the full range of dental care for the individuals that require treatment in the immediate future.

It is our understanding that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will soon be shipping quantities of N95 masks to the states to use at their discretion. We respectfully request that you consider appropriating equitable proportion of those masks to dentists so that the people in our state can obtain the dental care they need and want while still protecting the members of the dental team, our patients and ultimately the public at large.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further as soon as possible. I can be reached at 804-523-2191.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Dunn".

Ryan Dunn
Executive Director
Virginia Dental Association