



April 20, 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,

I am writing to you representing the Virginia Society of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons (VSOMS). We thank you for your leadership as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciate your attention to our concerns during this unprecedented COVID-19 public health emergency.

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) across the state have been at the forefront of this pandemic as we are the practitioners who manage emergency oral and facial trauma in addition to answering the call for the large number of dental emergency patients with infections and pain. These patients would otherwise end up in the Emergency Department and further remove valuable resources from more urgent needs in this crisis. It is critical that we use proper protection during these patient encounters.

As private small businesses, we have experienced difficulty with access to PPE, including N95 respirator masks, which are critical for providers being exposed to particulate aerosols. CDC Interim prevention and control recommendations for patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Setting recommends prioritizing respirators and AIIRs for aerosol-generating procedures.

VSOMS implores you to consider making OMSs critical first responders allowing for immediate access to these masks as soon as they become available. With these important protective devices, we can simultaneously provide essential care to patients in need and stem the spread of the virus.

As we reopen, access to antibody testing is also absolutely critical to ascertain and monitor our exposure status and, therefore, make human resources decisions aimed at protecting our teams and our patients as best as possible. We request having access to high quality antibody testing as it becomes available.

I truly appreciate your consideration of our interests and welcome any questions on the subject. I look forward to the time when this crisis is a distant memory.

Sincerely,

Dipa Patel, DDS
President
Virginia Society of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons