

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
The Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: COVID-19 - Supply and Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On behalf of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) and its 39,000 members, I am writing to you, in your capacity as the Chair of the Coronavirus Task Force, to request that the White House immediately appoint a senior Administration official to the Coronavirus Task Force specifically to oversee and coordinate the personal protective equipment (PPE) supply and distribution efforts. The appointment of such an official would provide Governors, health care facilities, and health care workers a direct point of contact to the person who can direct critical equipment and supplies to the facilities and workers who need them most.

We have already seen the initial adverse impact that COVID-19 presents to the United States, including our nation's health, economy, and social stability. The AGD is actively monitoring the COVID-19 situation and is advising member dentists to discuss COVID-19 with dental staff and to communicate to patients to ensure that standard precautions, in compliance with CDC guidelines, are being followed (<https://agd.org/coronavirus>).

U.S. Health care providers, first responders, and health systems currently face severe shortages of PPE, like N95 respirators and surgical masks, that will leave many insufficiently protected amid this outbreak. The availability of PPE in healthcare settings will enable general dentists to provide care and maintain the safety of dental practices, while also ensuring that we are doing everything in our power to prevent the spread of infections. As primary care doctors specializing in oral health, it is imperative that dental practices are able to continue to provide oral health care in an environment that is safe for patients, staff, and themselves.

The fundamental problem we are facing at this time is a lack of coordination for getting existing PPE supplies to the health care workers most at risk from shortages in a timely manner. This situation threatens to quickly undermine our most important national resource in the fight against COVID-19, our front-line health care workforce.

Millions of respirators are still being held in the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), according to officials with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. However, these respirators are being rationed and often not getting to facilities experiencing the most significant shortages in a prompt manner. The procedures for acquiring the needed equipment are opaque and differ from state to state.

Meanwhile, there is no apparent coordination to ensure newly manufactured respirators and other equipment are being distributed to the highest priority areas as they become available.



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This life-saving PPE must be directed to the facilities most in need, and this requires a higher level of coordination than now exists.

Just as the President appointed Admiral Giroir to untangle the issue of access to testing, this critical problem requires dedicated leadership to ensure that respirators and other PPE are provided to health care facilities and health care workers. Without this kind of leadership, health care workers will be left unprotected, at risk, and unable to do their jobs, putting our entire public health system at risk.

We look forward to continuing to work with you during this critical time to protect the health of our nation. The AGD appreciates your leadership and stands ready to work with you to address this unprecedented public health threat. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Daniel J. Buksa, JD, Associate Executive Director of Public Affairs, by phone at (312) 440-4328 or via email at daniel.buksa@agd.org to let us know how we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Connie L. White, D.D.S., FAGD'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Connie White, D.D.S., FAGD
President
Academy of General Dentistry