March 23, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor, State of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA  17108

Dear Governor Wolf:

On behalf of the more than 235 members of the Pennsylvania Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (PSOMS), I am writing to express grave concern over the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s recent guidance concerning the COVID-19 contagion currently in our Commonwealth.

The latest guidance, entitled “Guidance on COVID-19 for Dental Health Care Personnel in Pennsylvania,” dated March 22, 2020, gives direction to all dental providers, including dental specialists, mandates that all personnel must follow proper protocol when donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE), all personnel must use N95 masks or higher; goggles or a face-shield covering face and sides; disposable gowns and gloves, and treatment must be provided in negative pressure isolation rooms with HEPA filtration. These overly stringent and unrealistic guidelines will not allow the vast majority of dental practitioners to function and treat the public as these resources are simply not available to dentists and oral and maxillofacial surgeons.

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons are at the forefront of this pandemic as we are the dental practitioners who answer the call for the large number of dental emergency patients that include infections and pain that would end up in the Emergency Department and further remove valuable resources from more urgent needs in this crisis. Additionally, we have cardiac and cancer patients who are awaiting dental extraction prior to them receiving lifesaving treatment. They will not have dental clearance until we are able to treat them and therefore cannot have their procedures, or at least not without much greater risk, with the current guidelines.

I have included an example of the COVID-19 protocol from the University of Washington, another hard hit area, that better streamlines the process and would allow dentists and dental specialists to perform their emergency duties and thereby relieving the health system of undue stress that can be focused on the contagion at hand.
I hope you find this information useful and are able to amend the current COVID-19 guidelines to better allow the oral and maxillofacial surgeons the ability to help in this crisis.

I have also instructed our membership to contact your offices in support of this measure.

Respectfully,

Joseph E. Cillo Jr., DMD, MPH, PhD, FACS.
President, Pennsylvania Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

cc: Dr. Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania Secretary of Health