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Governor J.B. Pritzker
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker:

On behalf of the Illinois Dental Hygienists' Association (IDHA), I want to thank you for your leadership and guidance in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and applaud you for your ongoing work to provide the people of Illinois with support during these uncertain and unprecedented times. We are respectfully requesting that further guidance be given to those of us in the dental field in relation to how to keep our patients and the dental team safe while working during this crisis.

Dental hygienists are licensed primary care oral health professionals and members of the oral health care team who focus on preventing oral disease while identifying and treating oral disease. Dental hygienists administer a range of oral health services including prophylaxis, sealants, fluoride treatments, oral health education, oral cancer screenings, and oral health education, among other services. The dental team works in close proximity to the patient and utilizes handpieces that can generate aerosols, or tiny particles and droplets, from the patient's mouth that remain suspended in the air and pose a risk of infection to the dental staff and other patients. We write to alert you to the need for and availability of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) so dental hygienists and the entire dental team may safely and effectively provide care to patients.

On March 18, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued recommendations on elective surgery and procedures; these recommendations are particularly strong with respect to dental procedures. Indeed, dental procedures are afforded particular emphasis. The CMS recommendations caution that: ***“Dental procedures use PPE [personal protective equipment] and have one of the highest risks of transmission due to the close proximity of the healthcare provider to the patient. To reduce the risk of spread and to preserve PPE, we are recommending that all non-essential dental exams and procedures be postponed until further notice.”***

At the March 21 press briefing, you stated ***“To maximize the State’s availability of this PPE, IDPH released guidance to limit non-essential adult elective surgery and other medical and surgical procedures, including dental procedures, until further notice.”*** This directly fall into line with what the ***CDC guidance notes “if not clinically urgent, dental health care personnel should consider postponing non-emergency or elective dental procedures in patients who have signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.”***