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ILLINOIS DENTAL HYGIENISTS DISAPPOINTED OVER EXCLUSION IN COVID-19 VACCINE EFFORTS

We are licensed to provide injections, ready, willing and able to volunteer our services in the fight against COVID-19.

Illinois, 31st January 2021 - The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation invoked their emergency powers to modify the professional license and certification statutes, along with regulations for Illinois licensed dentists to administer COVID-19 vaccines. *Unfortunately, this proclamation did not include dental hygienists.*

Illinois has approximately 9,000 licensed dental hygienists proficient in administering local anesthetic injections, which are significantly more complicated to give than vaccinations. Dental hygienists deployment to provide COVID-19 vaccine administration would dramatically reduce the massive shortage of COVID-19 vaccinators.

Sherri Foran, President of the Illinois Dental Hygienists' Association states, "Per the Illinois Dental Practice Act statute for dental responders, (225 ILCS 25/54.2) a dental hygienist or dentist who is a dental responder is deemed to be acting within the bounds of his or her license when providing disaster immunizations, mobile and humanitarian care, during a declared State or National emergency."

President Foran went on to say, “We are qualified healthcare professionals who are ready to be part of the solution in Illinois. States that have included dental hygienists to provide COVID-19 vaccines include: Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington.”

Healthcare students have permission to vaccinate, while dental hygienists, who are already licensed to administer injections, have been overlooked as volunteers.

This news is met with great disappointment and leaves the public with fewer vaccinators to hasten herd immunity against COVID-19 in Illinois.

The Illinois Dental Hygienists' Association is a member organization powered by volunteers and focused on the public's total health by ensuring access to quality health care.