

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-222, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) and its 39,000 members, I would like to thank you and your colleagues' efforts to confront the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The first emergency supplemental funding package for COVID-19 was an essential first step as our nation develops a comprehensive response to the growing threat of COVID-19.

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>).

As Congress and the Administration move forward with developing an economic stimulus package that will support health care providers and their patients during this crisis, we would like to ensure that oral health care providers and their patients are included in those proposals. AGD requests that direct support is allocated to ensuring the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and supporting the many dental practices that are facing financial hardship due to voluntarily postponement of elective procedures in response to the spread of COVID-19.

The availability of PPE, such as surgical masks, 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. AGD supports any appropriate funding amount to ensure the continued production and availability of PPE.

Many dentists and their patients are choosing to delay elective procedures for at least the next three weeks, at the behest of calls from health stakeholders such as the American Dental Association (ADA)¹ and the White House's Coronavirus Task Force.² This will create a direct loss in billings for dental practices, which may jeopardize their fiscal health and ability to provide care to patients and wages to staff, as many practices operate as small businesses.

¹ **ADA recommending dentists postpone elective procedures.** American Dental Association. March 16, 2020. Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2020-archive/march/ada-recommending-dentists-postpone-elective-procedures>

² **Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing.** March 17, 2020. White House Press Briefings. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-members-coronavirus-task-force-press-briefing-4/>

Three weeks of lost billings for a general dentist that owns their practice could, on average, amount to a loss of over \$41,000, while potential expenses are estimated to be over \$23,000 in practice expenses, excluding owner dentist salaries. In 2019 over 150,000 general dentists were practicing in the U.S. The nationwide impact on general dentists of lost billings from elective procedures coupled with fixed practices expense during a 3-week period will amount to financial losses in the billions of dollars, even by low-end impact estimates (See Table 1 in Appendix). These losses will have an adverse impact on the nation's economy and dentists' ability to maintain their practices and deliver care to patients.

While it is a critical element to help curb the rapid spread of COVID-19, nationwide adoption of social distancing practices is already having a notable impact on the revenues of dental practices. Additionally, the hands-on and technical nature of oral health care and treatment rules out the possibility of dental practices operating remotely.

As primary care doctors specializing in oral health, it is imperative that dental practices are supported during this time of uncertainty and financial strain so that they are able to continue to provide non-elective oral health care in an environment that is safe for patients, staff and themselves.

AGD respectfully ask that Congress provide additional supplemental emergency funding of at least \$500 million, to be targeted to general dentistry practices so that they may:

- obtain scarce supplies (e.g. PPE);
- recuperate lost billings due to elective procedure cancellations and/or postponements;
- cover fixed practice expenses, so that dentists may continue to provide non-elective care in this time of crisis;
- provide additional COVID-19-related training guidance to staff and patients; and
- implement further precautions to prevent infections in the dental care setting.

We also urge that supplemental funding not be offset by cutting other health programs.

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,



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

Appendix:

Table 1.

Possible Impact of 3-Week Shutdown on U.S. General Dental Practices

Number of General Dentists in U.S. (2019) ³	158,240
Average Gross Billings Per General Dentist in Private Practice (2018) ⁴	\$717,350
Average Practice Expenses Per General Dentist (Excluding Shareholder Salaries) in Private Practice (2018) ⁵	\$403,570
Approximate 3-Week Gross Billing Average Per General Dentist in Private Practice	\$41,385
Approximate 3-Week Practice Expenses Per General Dentist in Private Practice	\$23,282
Approximate Nationwide Loss of Billing Impact on General Dentists for 3-Week Period	\$6,548,853,692
Approximate Nationwide Practice Expense Impact on General Dentists for 3-Week Period	\$3,684,283,661

³ **Supply of Dentists in the U.S.: 2001-2019.** ADA Health Policy Institute. February, 2020 Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/science-research/health-policy-institute/data-center/supply-and-profile-of-dentists>

⁴ **Income, Gross Billings, and Expenses: Selected 2018 Results from the Survey of Dental Practice.** ADA Health Policy Institute. November 2019. Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/science-research/health-policy-institute/dental-statistics/income-billing-and-other-dentistry-statistics>

⁵ **Income, Gross Billings, and Expenses: Selected 2018 Results from the Survey of Dental Practice.** ADA Health Policy Institute. November 2019. Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/science-research/health-policy-institute/dental-statistics/income-billing-and-other-dentistry-statistics>