

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons:
The experts in face, mouth and
jaw surgery®



American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

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August 24, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House
H-232
U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221
U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House
H-204
U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230
U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leaders Jeffries and McConnell:

On behalf of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), which represents more 9,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) in the United States, we support congressional efforts to ensure the nation's prepared for the possibility of another pandemic by reauthorizing the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA).

OMSs are surgically and medically trained dental specialists who treat conditions, defects, injuries and esthetic aspects of the mouth, teeth, jaws, neck and face. Typical procedures performed by OMSs include tooth extraction, dental implant placement, corrective jaw surgery, surgery for TMJ and facial pain, injury and trauma, oral, head and neck pathology as well as cleft lip/palate and craniofacial surgery.

OMSs are essential to the management of dental-related emergencies that, if left untreated, can quickly become life-threatening. OMSs played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic in treating patients with dental emergencies in private facilities, keeping them away from hospital emergency rooms.

OMSs are particularly prone to pharmaceutical and supply shortages, including PPE, due to their unique skillset and largely independent practice status. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated supply chain problems and produced significant shortages of medical supplies that paralyzed the U.S. healthcare system. OMSs and many providers outside large hospital systems struggled to obtain proper PPE at the height of the pandemic. And where PPE was available, prices were exorbitant.

As Congress moves forward with final passage of legislation reauthorizing PAHPA, AAOMS respectfully asks you to consider the following additional solutions:

- 1) Liability immunity for healthcare providers. Immunity protection should be provided to any healthcare provider delivering care – not just volunteer providers – whose actions or omissions are undertaken in good faith while providing services during a pandemic or national emergency. This would include liability protections for health care professionals who cross state lines during a national emergency to assist in relief efforts. Healthcare professionals, including OMSs, were being asked to provide care to patients in circumstances that may be outside their traditional scope of practice and in conditions that may lack adequate resources. AAOMS also supports legislation to shield businesses from lawsuits if they follow appropriate infection control recommendations or guidelines.
- 2) A process to ensure all healthcare providers and healthcare settings are fairly considered for PPE allocation. OMSs played a crucial role in treating patients with life-threatening dental infections in private office facilities and away from the emergency rooms. Our efforts helped to decrease an already overtaxed medical system and minimize patient exposure to the virus. OMSs providing such life-saving care in their offices, however, often were not recognized by state and federal governments as essential providers, and as such, encountered significant obstacles and delays to receiving PPE. We urge Congress to ensure providers such as OMSs are considered essential frontline providers and receive a fair allocation of PPE during national shortages.
- 3) We also encourage Congress to do what is in their authority to empower Attorneys General and their relevant agencies to go after unscrupulous vendors who price gouge during critical events, such as national pandemics.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. AAOMS welcomes the opportunity to work with you to advance this important legislation. Please contact Jeanne Tuerk, AAOMS Director of Government Affairs, at 800- 822-6637, ext. 4321, or jtuerk@aaoms.org.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Schwartz, DMD
AAOMS President