

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Mike Parson
Governor of Missouri
Missouri State Capitol
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

Nurses are on the front lines of patient care and protecting this skilled workforce must be a priority as we fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The Missouri Nurses Association, the Association of Missouri Nurse Practitioners, and the Missouri Association of Nurse Anesthetists are joining together to issue an urgent plea. To help curb the growing number of infected, we are also calling on your office to enact a statewide stay-at-home and shelter in place order to help slow the spread of COVID-19 across Missouri. We know that this threat will not subside quickly; therefore, we must issue statewide policy support to preserve our health care workforce over the next several months.

Right now, we have a critical need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies to weather the coming patient load. We anticipate a great shortage of PPE for this virus which can be spread easily from person to person and want your support to secure these for every nurse, not only those in medical centers, but small clinics as well. We are underestimating the potential magnitude of disease and how many people will be severely ill at this time. For one patient in the hospital for one night, a nurse will need to change her N-95 mask every 4-6 hours (so at least 2-3 masks per nurse per 12-hour shift). The filters are only good to breathe through for 4-6 hours before they become saturated.

Other measures that can be taken include removing restrictions on APRN practice. Since Missouri is under a state of emergency, we are requesting that your office suspend the barriers to care on nurse practitioners so that they may offer their time and expertise to help the health care system combat the growing threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, consider eliminating the collaborative practice requirement or geographic proximity and one-month same location practice for APRNs. In the current structure, if the collaborator is not available or ill, then the APRN cannot practice. If the APRN attempts to find a new collaborating physician, s/he is required to practice for one month at a location where both the physician and APRN are continuously present together. Also, telehealth should be expanded and rules on telehealth suspended. As you have done with physicians, please eliminate the requirement for live, interactive video or in person visits and the limitation to rural area of need. If any consultation or follow up is needed, this can be safely performed through other methods. The nurse practitioners of Missouri are ready and willing to provide the expert level of care if they are permitted to do so and authorized by the Missouri State Board of Nursing and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

Enacting all of these policies are what is needed immediately to curb illness, treat patients, and protect our nurses and the rest of the health care workforce. We are committed to working with your administration in addressing this pandemic to help ensure the loss of life in Missouri is minimized.

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