

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Values. Ethics. Advocacy.

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March 24, 2020

Honorable Governor Kristi Noem
500 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Governor Noem:

I am writing this letter in follow up to the one sent on March 20 in regard to telehealth coverage and prescription billing. We urge you to help expedite the waiver approval process for Medicaid providers and to provide direction to the state's private insurers to implement the same provisions.

On behalf of the members of the South Dakota State Medical Association (SDSMA), we call for the postponement of all non-essential elective surgeries and procedures in response to COVID-19. As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge to our state and we must take proactive steps to prevent further community spread of the virus.

For this order to have the result intended and to conserve precious medical equipment and resources, we urge you to define, "nonessential elective surgeries." We believe further direction should be sent to health care providers to:

- Suspend all non-essential or elective surgeries and procedures – to include dental care – that utilize PPE and/or ventilators.
 - A nonessential elective surgery means that the surgery can be delayed for a minimum of three months without undue risk to the current or future health of the patient as determined by the guidelines developed by the hospital, surgical center or other treating medical facility.
 - Surgeries or procedures, whether medical or dental, can proceed if:
 - There is a threat to the patient's life if the surgery or procedure is not performed;
 - There is a threat of permanent dysfunction of an extremity or organ system if the surgery or procedure is not performed;
 - There is a risk of metastasis or progression of staging of a disease or condition if the surgery or procedure is not performed; or
 - There is a risk that the patient's condition will rapidly deteriorate if the surgery or procedure is not performed and there is a threat to life, or to an extremity or organ system, or of permanent dysfunction or disability.

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Page 2

- In areas where PPE is required, limit personnel to only those essential to providing the necessary care, procedure or service.

Further, we urge you to close all dine-in restaurants and bars, and other nonessential businesses like fitness centers, etc. We truly understand the financial impact of such closures, the medical community is feeling it too. However, these difficult decisions must be made to prevent further spread and loss of life due to COVID-19.

Thank you for your leadership at this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Summerer, DO". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "R.J." and "DO" clearly visible.

Robert J. Summerer, DO
President