

May 29, 2020

Dear Governor Wolf,

As you have acknowledged, physicians and other health care providers are putting themselves at risk as they continue to serve Pennsylvania's medical needs. Outpatient services and ambulatory surgical care centers want to join in the efforts and open their doors. These providers will assist in the efforts to prevent and treat acute illnesses, chronic conditions, and non-emergent needs. A complete and successful health system demands both components of that system, inpatient and outpatient, to provide equally safe and efficient care.

Physician offices and outpatient facilities are critical components of the re-opening effort. Their essential services of cancer screenings, administering non-emergent and preventative care for patients, and tending to their mental health, help keep individuals out of the hospitals and Crisis Response Centers. Although, and similar to the rest of the medical community, they must protect their patients and healthcare workers in the same manner as hospitals and health systems.

We applaud your efforts to support health care facilities and front-line workers. However, health care providers who deliver outpatient care and would like to reopen are not being helped in their effort to safely reopen. Discussions with multiple medical and surgical specialties, have repeatedly and emphatically emphasized that practitioners cannot reopen their outpatient offices and facilities due to shortages of resources for rapid testing. Effective and efficient outpatient care is crucial. Outpatient offices and facilities, nonetheless, like inpatient facilities, need access to those necessary resources.

Without help for private practitioners, outpatient facilities and ambulatory surgical care facilities, patients will have no choice but to go to hospitals for their care. At a time when Pennsylvania is near flattening the curve of COVID-19 cases, emergency departments and health systems do not need additional patients. Furthermore, these health-compromised patients do not, and should not, endure potential exposure risks with COVID-19 patients.

Therefore, we are reaching out to ask the state to ensure parity of resources similar to that available for inpatient care. We are asking for resources that will provide for an increase rapid testing capacity for all outpatient services, including but not limited to, ambulatory surgical care facilities, private practices, and clinics.



Pennsylvania Academy
of Ophthalmology





Westmoreland County
Medical Society



Governor Wolf, please allow physicians and their practices to help you keep Pennsylvanians healthy and out of the hospitals. This can be done by setting aside a percentage of resources specifically for physician offices, outpatient facilities and ambulatory surgical care centers. Opening of these offices will free up hospital beds for those patients who need them. Their role in providing care for patients before they ever make it to the hospital is vital. This strategy is right for hospitals, private practices, outpatient facilities, ambulatory surgical care centers, and most importantly the citizens of Pennsylvania. Again, we appreciate your efforts throughout the COVID pandemic. Please do not hesitate to contact us for any further clarification of this needed request.

Respectfully,

Laurence R. John, MD
President, The Pennsylvania Medical Society

- Bucks County Medical Society
- Dauphin County Medical Society
- Erie County Medical Society
- Keystone Chapter of the American College of Surgeons
- Lancaster County Medical Society
- Lehigh County Medical Society
- Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter of the American College of Surgeons
- Montgomery County Medical Society
- Pennsylvania Academy of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery
- Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians
- Pennsylvania Academy of Ophthalmology
- The Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
- Pennsylvania Allergy and Asthma Association
- Pennsylvania Chapter, American College of Cardiology
- Pennsylvania Chapter, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Pennsylvania Neurological Society
- Pennsylvania Neurosurgical Society
- Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society
- Pennsylvania Society of Gastroenterology
- Pennsylvania Rheumatology Society
- Philadelphia County Medical Society
- Robert H. Ivy Pennsylvania Plastic Surgery Society
- Washington County Medical Society
- Westmoreland County Medical Society
- Pennsylvania Ambulatory Surgery Association