



April 21, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor, State of Florida
PL 05 Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

The Florida Medical Association greatly appreciates the leadership you have exhibited during the COVID-19 pandemic and the thoughtful approach you have taken in dealing with the myriad of problems this pandemic has presented. We understood the necessity of and supported your decision at the time to impose restrictions on non-essential surgeries and medical procedures through the issuance of Executive Order 20-72. The primary purpose of this order was to “conserve all medical supplies, including personal protective equipment, to only that which is necessary to be used in response to this emergency or for any other medical event of urgent or emergent nature.”

As this order has served its purpose, the FMA respectfully requests that you follow the recommendations of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and lift Executive Order 20-72 in the regions of Florida with low and stable incidence of COVID-19. The reopening of physician practices for procedures postponed due to the mandates of Executive Order 20-72 should take place in a coordinated fashion with the local physician community working with state public health officials to ensure that the availability of personal protective equipment and other supplies, workforce availability, facility readiness, and testing capacity are sufficient to ensure a safe resumption of in-person care.

It is essential that Florida physicians get back to seeing patients as soon as it safe for them to do so. There are thousands of patients with chronic kidney disease who are being asked to postpone visits. There are delays in treatment for certain cancer, cardiac bypass and congestive heart failure patients. Patients needing joint surgeries to alleviate chronic pain have been put on hold, and there are patients with serious medical conditions that need treatment who elect not to go to the hospital or their doctor’s office due to the “safer at home” order. While the state has understandably focused on the immediate needs of fighting COVID-19, it is imperative that we not ignore a potential second crisis: a wave of emergencies and fatalities among the people delaying care or going untreated. Many of the physician practices that would deal with this pent-up demand have seen their revenues plunge and face imminent closure. It is essential for the health and safety of all Floridians that the state do all it can to keep these practices open.

Lifting Executive Order 20-72 is an important first step to opening up Florida pursuant to the CMS guidelines and to ensure that patients will be able to continue to access the high-quality health care services they need. The FMA stands ready to assist you in this difficult task.

Sincerely,

Ronald F. Giffler, MD, JD, MBA
President, Florida Medical Association