



113 Madison Street ♦ P.O. Box 1028
Jefferson City, MO 65102-3015
800-869-6762 ♦ Fax 573-636-8552
www.msma.org

March 24, 2020

Dear Senator Blunt:

As physicians across the country voice their concerns about the various effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare system, the physicians of the state of Missouri would like to add our voice to the effort.

You may have seen a letter from March 20 addressed to Senate and House leadership, signed by the American Medical Association and several other national physician organizations. In this letter, the groups outline a plea for financial assistance in federal stimulus legislation. Such assistance “should support and sustain physicians and their practices during this unprecedented national emergency through tax relief; no-interest loans; direct payments; payment for virtual visits, including phone calls; and other measures.” The Missouri State Medical Association seconds this call to action.

While all physicians are facing unexpected and unfamiliar challenges as the pandemic progresses, independent physicians and practices are feeling an additional financial burden. Private practices across Missouri have been forced to cancel appointments as they desperately try to keep their patients safe by limiting exposure to this dangerous virus. This decrease in appointments reduces patients’ risk of contracting COVID-19, but the lack of revenue has already pushed many independent practices to a financial breaking point.

In rural areas where hospitals are few and far between, independent practices play an essential role in local economies. Physicians generate \$29.2 billion of economic activity in Missouri. Unfortunately, many practices must now weigh their financial options as they lose patients and income. Jobs are at stake as physicians and practice owners make difficult choices between maintaining their support staff’s salaries, making payments for their facilities and supplies, repaying loans, and an array of other financial necessities.

Physicians volunteer to put their patients’ wellbeing before their own. As non-emergent appointments dwindle and offices necessarily instruct patients stay home and protect their health, our members are feeling the financial repercussions. Without assistance from Congress, many Missouri physicians fear they may be unable to keep their practices open to serve their patients and the communities they love.

Please consider independent physician financial stability during discussions involving economic relief legislation. We greatly appreciate your consideration and support during this difficult time for our nation.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James A. DiRenna, DO". The signature is written in a cursive style.

James A. DiRenna, DO, FAFPP
President