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April 24, 2020

Dear Director Durham,

On behalf of the Iowa Dental Association, I would like to thank you for your ongoing leadership and dedication to address the economic fallout resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Association represents over 1,700 dentists in every corner of the state—a vast majority of whom are small business owners. On behalf of the Association, I would like to request that you consider the unique position of dentists when considering future economic relief for Iowa's small businesses.

When COVID-19 first emerged in Iowa, dentists were among the first professions to close their offices to prevent the spread of the virus. In fact, over 90% of dentists voluntarily suspended their practices during the week of March 16—about two weeks before the Governor's March 26 proclamation requiring dental offices to close.

Since closing their offices, dentists have remained on the forefront of this public health crisis by using their unique skills and resources to protect the public from COVID-19. Specifically, many dentists have continued providing emergency dental services to keep patients out of over-burdened hospital emergency departments. Unfortunately, providing these emergency services often results in a loss to dentists who must incur staffing and other expenses to perform these procedures. In addition, Iowa dentists have contributed excess personal protective equipment (PPE) to area hospitals and public health agencies to help them treat COVID-19 patients.

Iowa dentists are also in a unique position as it relates to the economic impact of closing their practices. Like many restaurants, bars, fitness centers, theaters, salons, and other businesses that are effectively closed, most dentists have experienced a **reduction of revenue of nearly 100 percent**. Unlike these other service providers, however, the dramatic decline in revenue is often delayed due to the nature of the services dentists provide. A significant portion of dental practices' revenue comes from insurance, and dentists often receive payment a month or more after rendering services. While dentists have continued to receive some ongoing revenue from services provided prior to closing, that revenue is now coming to an end, which will place many dentists in a dire financial situation—especially younger dentists who have large student loans. Of course, this also means that once dental practices reopen, there will be a significant delay before they begin receiving revenue.

The IEDA Small Business Relief Grant program provided critical and timely assistance to many small businesses across the state that experienced a 75% or more decline in revenue. I have discussed the grant program with a number of dentists in my area. While most of them applied for the program, I am not aware of any dentist who received assistance through the program—despite experiencing a nearly 100 percent decline in revenue. I provide this information to demonstrate the unique challenges facing the dental profession.

As insurance revenue ends and dental practices prepare to incur the costs associated with reopening their practices, it will become more important than ever to provide assistance to these practices to ensure that Iowans continue to have access to high-quality dental care. Therefore, as you consider providing additional economic relief to Iowa's struggling small businesses, I urge you to consider the unique impact the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on the dental profession and the critical public health services dentists provide. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Stuntz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ryan Stuntz, DDS, IDA President