

MARC J. LEVINE, MD

OUTGOING SPEECH

HOUSE OF DELEGATES SPEECH JUNE 14, 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to all those who have taken time out of their busy schedules to connect today. This past year has challenged our profession and the delivery of healthcare perhaps greater than at any time in the history of our great country. The Medical Society of New Jersey representing all physicians and patients of NJ has reaffirmed itself as both critically vital and relevant to the delivery of care to our patients and the preservation of our profession. We have been battle tested and have acted with selfless actions and commitment in the face of often overwhelming forces secondary to COVID 19.

Speaker of the House, MSNJ members, House of Delegates and invited guests it is truly an honor to speak to you as the 227th President of the Medical Society of New Jersey. I have been profoundly inspired by this organization and by the many who have come before me. I am grateful to the efforts of the MNSJ Administrative staff led by CEO Larry Downs who help guide our organization and its elected leaders. I am also confident in knowing that incoming President Dr. Philip Kline will lead the Medical Society of New Jersey to continued success.

This past year, prior to the COVID 19 epidemic, MSNJ was active with many issues that were affecting our members. In the face of COVID 19 these other issues seem as though they occurred years ago instead of only months ago. In the summer of 2019 legislation was moving forward to remove the cap on the ambulatory care facility tax. This tax is a percent of ,GROSS receipts and NOT Net receipts, and has a cap of 350K. MSNJ helped coordinate a well articulated opposition to this legislation which led to the legislation not moving forward and averting critical economic stress on physician practices. It was in the fall of 2019 that MSNJ hosted a Specialty Leadership Luncheon attended by officers and lobbyists of over twelve organizations. Here we learned the common issues that we all shared and jointly began to work on a “truth in advertising campaign” that is gaining legislative support. We were successful in helping move a major insurance company from requiring prior authorization for ultrasounds and delaying care. And, it wasn’t too long ago that “vaping” was our number one health concern and MSNJ was there with Senator Menendez issuing a joint statement. MSNJ grew its presence and contribution to the AMA and serviced its members while remaining fiscally responsible. We were true to our mission in supporting doctors and providing care to the great state of NJ.

Recently, my high school daughter asked me what was worse 9-11 or the COVID pandemic. What would you have said? I promptly responded that they were different. I said that this NOT a mathematical calculation of human loss, sorrow or morbidity but because of what subsequently happened to our country. The horrors of 9-11 were met with the United States rallying together. Horns honking, big hugs handshakes and person to person interaction were the staples. The national anthem was played at packed ballparks to audiences reveling in patriotism and thankfulness to our police force and firefighters. On the other hand, COVID 19 has to a large extent forced an unwelcomed isolationism with masks, social distancing, silent ballparks and a shutdown of the economy. But, the Medical Society of

New Jersey has been at the forefront of responding to COVID 19 and moving us through the light at the end of tunnel.

During the COVID 19 crisis MSNJ built bridges with leaders from all aspects of healthcare and government that have led to our state's response to COVID. I had the honor of representing MSNJ on committees as appointed by the office of Governor Murphy including the COVID 19 Professional Advisory Committee with MSNJ CEO Larry Downs. This committee was formed at the onset of the crisis and includes CEOs of healthcare systems, recognized healthcare policy experts, as well as allied professional leaders. Our MSNJ Ethics Committee drafted a scarcity of resource document that was presented to this PAC to help address this early COVID issue. To help our colleagues, MSNJ hosted a sub-committee of pulmonologists and critical care specialists weekly to share information. Allocation of ventilators, alternative hospital sites, care for our weary colleagues, remdesivir distribution and now opening of non-urgent surgery and the healthcare system have been a few of the topics that the COVID 19 PAC continues to meet bi-weekly to discuss with the NJ Commissioner of Health. More recently I was asked to serve on the NJ Restart and Recovery Task Force which looks to open up the economy of NJ in a safe fashion. In addition, the Medical Society of NJ has had meetings with numerous elected officials including US Congressman Frank Pallone Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee as well Senators Booker and Menendez. Through these and other channels MSNJ has successfully obtained resources to support physicians both in private practice and those employed by large entities. We have been tireless with efforts to address the economic impact on practices that will be long-lasting and not disappear despite a decline in COVID cases.

Last month, I testified before the NJ Senate as one of six individuals invited by Senate President Stephen Sweeney. This special hearing was called to discuss the status of healthcare in NJ and chaired by Senator Paul Sarlo where I was the only physician. This was perhaps one my proudest moments as well as most humbling moments of this past year as I had the responsibility of representing our physicians- my colleagues, who have acted like heroes during this COVID crisis.

I believe that four themes were echoed during this discussion:

The first is that the medical profession successfully responded to this crisis in a herculean fashion.

The second is that physician practices will need economic assistance to rebound and restart.

The third is that it is clearly time to re-open up the healthcare industry for non-COVID health issues both hospital based and office based.

Finally, if there IF there is a resurgence in COVID -WE ARE READY.

Most recently we saw the death of George Floyd which was truly a tragedy on many levels. As a profession we must continue to be vigilant to provide healthcare in a fashion that is accessible to all residents of New Jersey. We must continue to be sensitive to the needs of those less fortunate as well as those who feel under served for whatever reason. We must work together to help heal any social

divides that may have surfaced during this time by perhaps being a little more sensitive to those we treat. We need to be unified as a profession and hopefully help unify our state and country.

This upcoming year will bring continued challenges to our profession. We will need to navigate the role and cost of incorporating telemedicine into practices and to maintain a payment parity. We will need to economically assist practices to again be viable and not disappear. We will need to support One Health New Jersey which will allow different EMR systems to speak with each other. We need to remain vigilant in addressing and appealing unfair tax burdens and addressing fair payments both in network and out of network providers. We must continue to support our medical students who amaze us with their intellect, organizational skills, independence and effectiveness. They are after all, the future of our profession.

Friends, this past year has shown the solidarity of our colleagues as we were pivotal at every level in addressing the COVID 19 pandemic. We built bridges with hospital systems, government officials both state and federal as well as with other healthcare providers. We narrowed down the entire healthcare delivery system and then opened it back up. We have supported each other as professionals and colleagues. And through it all, we did it our way—by putting patient care first. The Medical Society of New Jersey has been the backbone and the glue that helped each and every physician; member or not, through its vigilance and dedication, move through these difficult times.

As I conclude:

I would like to thank my wife Robin for her love, support and understanding of the time I spent away from her and my family this past year. Similarly, a big I love you to my 3 children Benjamin, Joey and Emi who I often made read my Presidential Messages and listen to my talks. I am so proud of each of you.

Colleagues and guests, it has been an honor and privilege to serve as the 227th President of MSNJ. I thank each and every one of you for your support and dedication to this organization, our profession and to the healthcare of New Jersey. This past year has shown us, that while we do not know what tomorrow will bring-The Medical Society of New Jersey will be there --battle tested to protect our profession and patients.

To each of you—

Be Well, Be Safe and Be Proud