



MISSISSIPPI  
ACADEMY  
OF  
FAMILY  
PHYSICIANS

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April 1, 2020

Thomas E. Dobbs, III, MD, MPH  
State Health Officer  
MS Department of Health  
570 East Woodrow Wilson Drive  
Jackson, MS 39216  
thomas.dobbs@msdh.ms.gov

Dear Dr. Dobbs:

The Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians, representing 1,333 family physicians, residents and medical students across the state of Mississippi, would like to express our support of your leadership in this time of crisis. Our family physicians are transitioning to telephone, Telehealth, and drive-thru services to try and help care for those who do not need to be in the emergency rooms and hospitals. We greatly appreciate your leadership and expertise during this pandemic. As with general medical practice and medical practice during a time of crisis, family physicians remain the constant source of providing frontline medical care to the citizens of Mississippi.

The MAFP respectfully requests that the Department of Health consider using its authority in five specific ways, which would greatly help our efforts:

**(1) First, we implore you to help all family physicians in communities across the state obtain adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), so that we can continue to triage less-ill patients, without becoming infected ourselves.** The MAFP is hearing a desperate need for PPE from our members who maintain independent practices, many in rural areas. These doctors are small business owners who do not have a hospital system providing them with protective equipment, and they are failing to find resources to support them. Some healthcare providers are using makeshift PPE if proper PPE is not available. This is of great risk to doctors, staff, and patients. If our vulnerable rural areas lose healthcare providers to COVID-19, there is no one to care for communities during these weeks of isolation. The bottom line is that primary care is the backbone of all healthcare in Mississippi, and our state cannot afford to have communities without access to a physician due to exposure from lack of PPE.

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*MISSION: Supporting Family Medicine physicians as they improve the health of all Mississippians.*

**(2) Second, as we continue to see the impact of the first wave of infection throughout the state, please consider mandated “Safer at Home” orders much like our neighboring state of Tennessee just executed.** Even if a violation of these orders was punished only by a ticket, the overwhelming majority of Mississippi citizens would respect your orders – and we, as a state, could expect fewer infections and fewer deaths;

**(3) Third, we also request a mandatory self-quarantine of 14 days for all individuals returning from international and domestic travel, as well as a mandatory 14-day quarantine for individuals from other states seeking refuge in Mississippi; and**

**(4) Fourth, consider closing for at least two weeks all non-essential businesses for public use, limiting essential activity and essential services to the greatest extent possible while using thoughtful planning, careful consideration, and strict adherence to CDC guidelines and safety recommendations.**

Without a strong, definitive statement from your office, the state will remain a patchwork of different rules and guidelines with boundaries that are arbitrary and a virus that does not respect them. COVID-19 is a public health enemy and Mississippi leaders and citizens should act accordingly. We need an effective strategy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic now.

The Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians strongly urges you to act immediately to protect all Mississippians so that our workforce and economy can rebound swiftly and our citizens can resume lives of safety and normality. We understand the difficult position you are in. These are unprecedented times which call for unprecedented action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William M. Grantham MD".

William M. Grantham, MD-  
President

On behalf of MAFP Board of Directors