

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-222, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) and its 39,000 members, I would like to thank you and your colleagues' efforts to confront the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) through response measures such as the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act*. The provisions in the CARES Act related to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) administered through the Small Business Administration (SBA) are critical to ensuring small businesses, such as dental practices, are able to avoid closing their doors permanently.

Unfortunately, as of April 16th, the SBA announced that the PPP and EIDL appropriations had lapsed and that applications would no longer be accepted, leaving many small business owner dentists and the staff they employ without a lifeline during this public health emergency. While the original funds provided for these programs was substantial, **supplementary funding for these vital small business relief programs is needed now.**

Without access to relief, small business owner dentists complying with the CDC recommendations to only provide emergency services may have no choice but to declare bankruptcy and shutdown practices entirely. Of even greater significance than the undeniable negative economic ramifications tied to private dental practices closing across the U.S., our nation's ability to provide Americans access to oral health care could be damaged beyond reckoning.

As Congress looks to respond to the crisis and refine relief programs, AGD requests that Congress help streamline the SBA loan application process, as many dentists reported having great difficulty in accessing loans and grants while they were available. We also ask that the decision to limit the EIDL grants to \$1,000 per employee be rescinded, as this does not take into account differences in compensation, and many small businesses were not aware of this limit when applying.

We would also like you to consider allowing small business dental practices to choose the 8-week period for which they seek forgiveness for the loans and rehire back staff before December 31, 2020, instead of requiring them to rehire staff by June 30, 2020. This flexibility would allow these practices to make decisions about staffing and payroll based on when they plan to reopen fully. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration classifies dental health care personnel in the **very high exposure risk** category¹ and the ability to fully reopen dental practices is contingent on the ability to completely control the coronavirus pandemic in a relatively short period of time.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Infection Control – Dental Settings](#), April 2020.



560 W. Lake St. 312.440.4300
Sixth Floor Fax: 312.440.0559
Chicago, IL USA Toll-free: 888.243.3368
60661-6600 agd.org

As primary care doctors specializing in oral health, it is essential that small business owner dentists are supported during this time of uncertainty and financial strain so that they can continue to provide emergency oral health care in an environment that is safe for patients, staff, and themselves.

We look forward to continuing to work with you during this critical time to protect the health of our nation. The AGD appreciates your leadership and stands ready to work with you to address this unprecedented public health threat. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Daniel J. Buksa, JD, Associate Executive Director of Public Affairs, by phone at (312) 440-4328 or via email at daniel.buksa@agd.org to let us know how we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Connie L. White, D.D.S., FAGD'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Connie White, D.D.S., FAGD
President
Academy of General Dentistry