

March 21, 2020

Senator Deb Fischer
454 Russell
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
grant_kros@fischer.senate.gov

Senator Ben Sasse
107 Russell
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Shannon_Hossinger@sasse.senate.gov

Re: COVID-19

Dear Senators Fischer and Sasse:

Thank you for your commitment to finding good solutions amidst this challenging time. We are appreciative of Senator Fischer asking a Nebraska dentist to share “what dentists need” with you during this unprecedented time. It is challenging to anticipate fully what dentists will need in the coming weeks and months, but as a profession, dentists have always put patient care in the forefront of our practice decisions. Otherwise, the Nebraska Dental Association board would not have recommended that Nebraska dental practices provide only emergency care prior to the American Dental Association’s recommendation that was announced 5 hours later. The economic impact of suspending dental care for patients has both an oral health impact on our patients and an economic impact on every community in Nebraska.

These are our needs where we would appreciate your consideration.

Immediate considerations

Nebraska Dentists are not looking for a handout, but we do need financial help.

- a. We would like to have a zero or very low interest loan package that is for dentists who own dental practices
- b. We need to be able to cover our payroll or risk all employees seeking unemployment benefits and overwhelming the system.
- c. Temporary suspension of payments due for federally-held student loans and business loans.
- d. We would like to see a partial loss of income compensation for the dentists, including associate dentists, as we will continue to provide emergency care to patients, it will not be sufficient to sustain long term. With some compensation we will be more able to continue comprehensive care following the outbreak and retain our employees.

Other considerations

- a. Our employees who may be on in-office sponsored health or other insurance plans will have the choice to either pay the very high cost of COBRA plans or go without coverage. At the time of a global health pandemic, this is the worst time to have no health insurance
- b. Hospitals need to work with dentistry to divert people with dental problems away from the emergency rooms. It must be a true team approach and not a financially driven decision that benefits one party over the other. Dentists are best trained to handle dental emergencies.
- c. We need better access to personal protective equipment when patients have been diagnosed with communicable diseases, either airborne or bloodborne. Availability of Level 3 Masks and N95 Masks is a necessity.
- d. There needs to be guidelines for when dentists should use N95 masks and a regulated price for them in the marketplace.

- e. Until more information is available, these masks need to be available to do everyday dentistry and continue to care for patients.
- f. When issues are present that involve dental offices and the profession of dentistry, decisionmakers should be reaching out to our state dental association leadership for collaboration.
- g. We need as dental practice owners, a full exemption on the newly passed Families First Coronavirus Response Act. We won't be able to make payroll, so when you give us the tax credits in March 2021, our practices will have been bankrupt for 9 months already.
- h. Our staff members and their potential loss of income will have an immediate and possibly devastating impact on our communities.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of your constituents and we are so optimistic that, with your help, small business will be able to return to providing the \$1.2M economic stimulus per office, the excellent place of employment, the necessary dental treatment, and the essential service to our patients that we have for years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenneth R. Tusha DDS". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Ken Tusha, DDS
President