NEW YORK DENTISTS URGE STATE APPROVAL TO RETURN TO FULL PRACTICE

(Albany, NY) – Dentists across the State of New York are calling for Governor Andrew Cuomo to rescind his emergency order limiting dental practices to emergency and urgent care and to expedite and immediately approve Department of Health guidelines allowing dental offices to provide comprehensive service to their patients. New York dental offices have been limited to emergency and urgent care since March 20 due to concerns related to COVID-19. That means that patients have not had full access to dental care for more than 60 days.

The New York State Dental Association (NYSDA), in a letter to the Governor today, seeks immediate attention to the pressing need to provide patients with access to full dental care. The association and its 12,000 members are expressing grave concerns not only to the Governor’s office but also the Department of Health and state legislators that continuing these limitations will have a negative impact on overall patient health and on the future viability of dental offices. With the flattening of the curve and the imminent implementation of state guidelines for enhanced safety practices, NYSDA is urging that all dental offices be allowed to open immediately and not wait for phased openings and further delays.

“Remaining in emergent/urgent only status in New York has the potential to threaten overall patient health,” Mark J. Feldman, executive director of NYSDA, wrote in his letter to the Governor. “Dental health is human health, and neglecting care can lead to serious health issues. Further delays in full dental care will move many day-to-day cases to emergency status, making the ultimate response more complex and expensive.”

He added, “Dental offices have been open for emergent/urgent care throughout this health crisis and have been handling these most challenging cases with extreme care,” added Feldman. “We are more than ready to extend these cautionary practices to all patients. If we can manage these most dire cases, we are certainly prepared to provide standard dental care.” Feldman also pointed out that dentists are well prepared to safely open their practices using state guidelines, OSHA-approved precautions, and a long history of infection control and extreme care to assure the safety of patients, doctors and staff. “With the experience, knowledge, and equipment gained over the past two months, dentists are well-prepared to safely serve their patients.”

Today, in addition to sending its letter to the Governor, NYSDA urged its members to reach out to their Senate and Assembly members seeking support for allowing all dental offices across the state the option to provide immediate full services to their patients. Of note, full service has been restored in the neighboring states of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

The American Dental Association has developed a comprehensive guide educating dentists on all practice modifications necessary to treat patients safely in the COVID-19 environment and NYSDA has served as a steady source of relevant information to its members. On behalf of its member dentists, NYSDA has been
in continuing discussions with the offices of the Governor, Department of Health, and key state and county officials on appropriate guidelines to assure the safety of patients, doctors, and staff. In concert with the ADA, NYSDA has also successfully advocated for a higher level of access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for dental offices.

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The New York State Dental Association, founded in 1868, is one of the largest state constituents of the American Dental Association and represents more than 70 percent of dentists practicing in New York State.

Founded in 1859, the American Dental Association is the oldest and largest national dental society in the world and serves as the leading source of oral health-related information for dentists and their patients.