

March 21, 2020

Dear Governor Pritzker and Dr. Ngozi Ezike:

Thank you for supporting health care workers. Given the importance of social distancing to “flatten the curve” and blunt the impending surge of COVID-19, we applaud your order for Illinois to shelter-in-place. Your call for donations of PPE to the state is also to be greatly commended. We also applaud your actions to support the use of telemedicine to help us provide the best possible care for our patients while keeping patients, clinicians, and citizens safe.

Further urgent and aggressive action is needed to **protect health care workers and prevent a shortage of clinicians on the front lines** as we prepare for a surge in patients needing acute care, similar to the situations in Italy, France, and Spain. **While we can produce more masks, convert facilities to accommodate more hospital beds, and order more ventilators, we cannot produce more clinicians to deal with the pandemic.**

We ask for your further support to protect health care workers using these key strategies:

- 1. Appropriate PPE: Expand efforts to ensure robust supply of appropriate PPE.** We are encouraged by the outpouring of support and donations of cloth masks from the community; Cloth masks may play a role in helping us preserve or extend our limited supply. **But let's be clear-- CLOTH MASKS ARE NOT PPE and cannot replace PPE for frontline health care workers. Please continue state-wide efforts to procure appropriate PPE and your advocacy to move the federal government to act.**
- 2. Provide housing support for health care workers at risk or in quarantine:** Health care workers are at high risk of infection and are at risk of bringing that infection home to their families. **Housing for health care workers in quarantine will be needed.** We applaud Mayor Lightfoot's efforts to partner with hotels for additional housing during this crisis but are calling for action throughout the state to partner with hotels and academic institutions with dormitories to help house health care workers who need to be quarantined..
- 3. Support health care worker mental health:** While PPE is essential to protect health care workers' physical health, **strategies are needed to support mental health and reduce the risk of PTSD and burnout in those on the frontline.** Preparedness and responsiveness are broad strategies to support first-responders. We ask you to help agencies and organizations extend these strategies to health care workers and to support access to mental health resources for health care workers.

Healthcare workers are our greatest and most scarce resource in the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will need continued support to serve our critical functions in the months to come. Help us continue to follow our calling and care for our patients through these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Vineet Arora, MD
Herbert T. Abelson Professor of Medicine
Associate Chief Medical Officer-Clinical Learning Environment
University of Chicago Medicine

Eve Bloomgarden, MD
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Molecular Medicine
Northwestern University

Shikha Jain, MD, FACP
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Hematology and Oncology
Rush University Medical Center, Director of Social Media and Communications
Rush University Cancer Center

Ali Khan MD MPP

Executive Director, Oak Street Health

Amisha Wallia MD, MS
Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Molecular Medicine
Center for Health Services and Outcomes Research
Northwestern University

Laura J. Zimmermann, MD, MS, FACP
Assistant Professor of Preventive and Internal Medicine
Rush University Medical Group Director of Clinical Preventive Medicine
Rush University Medical Center

****ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES WERE REMOVED FOR PRIVACY PURPOSES****