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May 18, 2020

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH
Acting Commissioner, Department of Public Health
410 Capitol Avenue
Hartford CT, 06134

Dear Commissioner Gifford,

On behalf of the physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS) we want to thank you for the commitment you made to protect and increase access to healthcare services as the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services. We also want to acknowledge the incredible dedication you are demonstrating serving as the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Public Health as well. We are pleased that you, as a physician, have accepted this appointment by Governor Lamont.

These are obviously difficult and unprecedented times. Our priority at CSMS has been to focus on the health and safety of our members, their staffs and patients. We will not be able to quantify the impact of this crisis for a significant amount of time. This is not just about those infected by COVID-19, but also those who have and will forego health services.

However, we are trying to continue focusing on critical issues which still exist or are exacerbated by the crisis. First, we have been working with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) as we know there has been a significant increase of intimate partner violence while people have been quarantined. Second, is the public health impact of the increase of addiction during this period from both opioid and alcohol abuse. Related or unrelated to the crisis, there also remains several issues on which we are concerned. These include:

- Vaccine exemptions, particularly if a COVID-19 vaccine is developed
- Declining vaccinations rates due to decreased access to physician offices
- The potential impact on children seeking enrollment in summer camps and the inability to receive timely certification of their medical health prior to enrolling
- The potential increase of the use of cannabis, without proper research and focus on public health
- Expanding Red Flag Laws and clearly categorizing gun violence as a public health emergency
- Continuing to work on maternal morbidity and mortality to ensure it doesn't increase during the crisis
- Monitoring public health and social determinants related to the virus.

We have other concerns that are not within the purview of DPH, including affordable access to pharmaceuticals during these difficult times and ensuring networks stay adequate, as many

physicians are seeing a patient drop between 75-90%. However, all these issues are connected regardless.

We look forward to our continued relationship with you and hope at some point we will be able to meet to discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Subbarao', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bollepalli Subbarao, MD
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Ferrucci', with a stylized initial 'K' and a long horizontal flourish.

Ken Ferrucci
Executive Director