



Washington Academy of Physician Assistants

January 7, 2022

The Honorable Governor of State Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor | PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Honorable Secretary of Health Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH
Washington State Department of Health | P.O. Box 47890
Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary of Health Shah,

The global pandemic fell heavily on the world and when it extended its reach to the US, Washington would be the first to be affected. All eyes were upon us and our response. COVID-19 we learned, would demand a lot from us but more so as health care professionals. We carried the burdens, not only to care for those affected but confronted by more stringent safety precautions at work, and at home to protect not only ourselves, but our patients and those we loved...our families.

It only took weeks to appreciate the threat of COVID-19 as it raced around the world and back again having mutated for another round. A crisis is upon us. Upon Washington once again. As Physician Assistants, we are committed to serve our communities and strive to provide unparalleled care. Daily we evaluate, diagnose, treat and prescribe to our patients across all medical specialties. This crisis marks a turning point and should be a catalyst for our public health to be bolstered.

Our emergency departments have surpassed capacity and our hospitals are full. Routine services are being suspended throughout the state. As clinicians who collaborate with physicians and nurses, we are overwhelmed with the extra hours, extra shifts; increasing the strain we face in balancing the needs of our work and our families. The results have been stress, fatigue, anxiety and burn-out.

We are asking you to declare Washington under a statewide crisis and immediately provide resources to assist us in our hospitals and clinics. We are aligned with our physician colleagues at the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) and support their plea with the following action plan:

- Continue or increase incentives to long-term care (LTC) providers for serving patients who are discharging from hospitals.
- Increase the budget for the Department of Social and Health Services to immediately hire more staff to facilitate transitions out of hospitals.
- Immediately address barriers to guardianship for patients who are ready to be discharged from acute care hospitals, including allowing family members to agree to transfers rather than languishing while waiting for guardians to be appointed.
- Use the national guard to assist with staffing shortages in long term care facilities and hospitals, including many non-clinical services such as patient transport, meal service, and laboratory assistance.

Governor Inslee, please address this crisis that our health care system is in and provide resources to the health care teams that serve your communities and citizens at large.

Sincerely,

Sue Cole

Sue Cole, PA-C
President, WAPA

cc: American Academy of Physician Assistants