

April 15, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor, State of Texas
Capitol Bldg., Room 2S.1
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott,

Last week on Friday, April 10th, four Senators (Doctors Buckingham, Campbell, Schwertner, plus Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chair Kolkhorst) sent you a letter with recommendations on how to address certain concerns raised by the medical community. We, the undersigned members of the Texas Senate, would like to emphasize the need to open our hospitals incrementally to meet the needs of our citizens.

Our shared concern is ensuring patients across the state continue to have access to medically necessary surgical care. There is, of course, emergency care that is still being performed, and we do not want to cause any interruptions. However, there are also many urgent situations that necessitate medical intervention in a timely manner to improve the life and function of patients. The Texas Medical Board rules issued after your executive order (GA-09) have created some confusion for providers across the state. It has been brought to our attention that critical surgeries involving cancer and other diseases are being delayed for fear that a provider could lose his or her license, fined and potentially face jail time. Many patients are suffering with serious conditions. We greatly appreciate the ongoing discussions with members of your staff and the COVID-19 response team about the best way to provide adequate care to patients. Consideration should be given to a staged resumption of non-emergent surgical care. The first stage might include elective outpatient day surgeries if the hospital verifies that it has enough PPE and bed capacity to meet the demands and potential needs as well as verifying the patient does not have any symptoms of COVID-19. Simultaneously, rural hospitals should be able to resume surgical care as the geographic distance for care is quite burdensome to many patients in rural Texas. Finally, the last stage would of course be the resumption of elective cases for individuals at higher risk of morbidity with COVID-19.

Thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented times. We stand ready to help you in any way as we find a way forward in keeping Texas safe while making sure needs are met.

Sincerely,
The Senators of the Texas Senate



Carol Alvarado



Paul Bettencourt




Brian Birdwell



Dawn Buckingham, MD



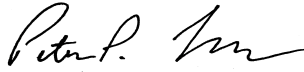
Donna Campbell, MD



Brandon Creighton



Pat Fallon




Pete Flores



Bob Hall



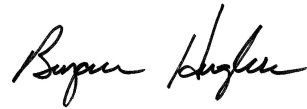
Kelly Hancock



Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa



Joan Huffman



Bryan Hughes



Nathan Johnson



Lois Kolkhorst



Eddie Lucio, Jr.



José Menéndez



Borris Miles



Jane Nelson



Robert Nichols



Angela Paxton



Charles Perry



Beverly Powell



José Rodríguez



Charles Schwertner, MD



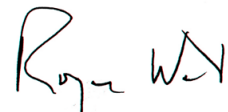
Kel Seliger



Larry Taylor



Kirk Watson



Royce West



John Whitmire



Judith Zaffirini