



November 20, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam:

We thank your administration for proactively developing a vaccination plan as we await further details from the CDC, so that Virginia can be ready to act quickly when a vaccine is approved.

On behalf of the Virginia Dental Association and the Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association, we ask that any vaccination program follow the recommendations of the [framework](#) released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in early October in considering dentists and dental hygienists essential healthcare workers, prioritized for access to a vaccine.

Dentistry is an essential health care service and dentists, and their teams are essential frontline health care workers. We saw in the early days of the pandemic that, by keeping dental offices open for emergency procedures, we were able to limit the number of patients going to hospitals for oral health issues where they could potentially be exposed to the virus.

This prioritization will add to the enhanced safety protocols that are already being employed to keep dental providers, staff and patients safe. It can also further reassure patients that the dental office is a safe place to go to receive care and encourage them not to postpone treatment for oral health issues that could grow more complicated, expensive and difficult to treat over time, with negative impacts on overall health.

Thank you again for taking a proactive approach to Virginia's plan for the possibility of a COVID-19 vaccine. Our associations will be glad to discuss this matter further and to be of continued service in Virginia's effort to combat this virus.

We can be contacted via email (Dr. Iuorno at president@vadental.org and Tracey Martin at president@vdha.net). Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank Iuorno, DDS, MS

Tracey C Martin, RDH, BSDH

President

President

Virginia Dental Association

Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association