April 15, 2020

As respiratory care practitioners and respiratory therapists, we are on the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19. Because of the nature of our work, we are brought into especially close proximity to COVID-19 patients. In these situations, our personal protective equipment (PPE) is the only thing that stands between us and infection.

But many of us are not being issued crucial PPE — including N95 masks, face shields, eye protection, nitrile gloves, and isolation gowns — during procedures such as intubation that normally require such equipment because of the high infection risk. Some of us have even faced the outrageous experience of being refused N95 masks and other PPE even as the doctors and nurses working right beside us in the very same room are wearing them. This inequality is demeaning. It is also dangerous to ourselves, our families, the other patients we care for, and the public at large.

We expect to be protected and respected in our work. To that end, we call on all hospitals throughout the state to:

- Provide respiratory care practitioners and respiratory therapists the same PPE that doctors and nurses have for any given procedure. Such PPE includes N95 masks, face shields, eye protection, nitrile gloves, powered air purifying respirators (PAPR), and isolation gowns.
- Respect our input. We are right beside the patients who are suffering the most from COVID-19 — and we have valuable, sometimes even life-saving guidance to share.

We call on you to quickly implement and enforce these measures at your hospitals. By working together, we can ensure all our health and safety.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Hayworth, Alameda Hospital
Tracie Reames, Alameda Hospital
Mark Zaragoza, Anaheim Global Medical Center
Micheal Thomasson, Bakersfield Memorial Hospital
Booker Taylor, California Hospital Medical Center
Edith Gonzalez, California Hospital Medical Center
Godfredo Razon Jr, California Hospital Medical Center
Russel Sion, California Hospital Medical Center
Salina Koy, California Hospital Medical Center
Nelson Miller, Centinela Hospital Medical Center
Esvedy Areliano, Chapman Global Medical Center
Frank De Asis, Chapman Global Medical Center
Josephine Saliman, Chapman Global Medical Center
Veronica Gonzalez, Chapman Global Medical Center
Demi Felix, City of Hope
Alka Sharma, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Andrew Ugarte, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Armstead Windham, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Brach Price, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Brian Shelton, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Cheryl Solonio, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Constance Finley, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Darla Mondragon, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Donna Talabis, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Ember J Allinsug, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Emma Shelton, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Gina Brown, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Jennifer Gerne, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
John Quan, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
John Smith, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Justin Knowles, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Karen Thomas, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Khusboo Patel, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Kim Smith, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Liliana Owen, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Louise Arensberg, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Marc Lackson, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Marlyn Espino, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Melissa Abello, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Michael Kingston, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Natalie Garcia, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Ravinder Dhillon, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Richard Drenning, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Rolan Mughirang, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Stephanie Lumley, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Veronica Carlos, Community Hospital of San Bernardino
Irene Guevara, CPMC Mission Bernal/St Luke’s Hospital
Jon Belardo, CPMC Mission Bernal/St Luke’s Hospital
Linda Feist, CPMC Mission Bernal/St Luke’s Hospital
Paul Lopez, CPMC Mission Bernal/St Luke’s Hospital
Vive Jano Ngoy, CPMC Mission Bernal/St Luke’s Hospital
Gisella Thomas, Desert Regional Medical Center
Jessica Woodburn, Desert Regional Medical Center
Adam Kelley, Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz
Amir Beetalajan, Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz
Clark Phillips, Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz
Erik Strong, Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz
Phuong Holland, Dominican Hospital Santa Cruz
Dennis Marshall, El Camino Hospital
Curtis Bender, Emanuel Medical Center
Rachel Cross, French Hospital Medical Center
Tiffany Ortiz, French Hospital Medical Center
Denise Bermejo, Garden Grove Hospital & Medical Center
Grace Licup, Garden Grove Hospital & Medical Center
Hong Tran, Garden Grove Hospital & Medical Center
Lois Masumoto, Garden Grove Hospital & Medical Center
Michael Latham, Garden Grove Hospital & Medical Center
Dana Hardy, Kaiser-Antioch
Erika Chinchilla, Kaiser-Antioch
Travis Clark, Kaiser-Antioch
Renee Ritchie, Kaiser-Antioch
Ruby Robley, Kaiser-Antioch
Sharon Lewis, Kaiser-Antioch
Vincent Martinez, Kaiser-Antioch
China Tran, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Christian Cruz, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Christiana Luna, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Georgina Moreno, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Jackie De Haro, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Lei Lee, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Magda Martin-Lomeli, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Paul Gaa, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Selina Yeh, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Veralyn Benitez, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Veronica Tsang, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Viviane Chiu, Kaiser-Baldwin Park
Mark DeLaLorre, Kaiser-Downey Clinic
Joseph Mejia, Kaiser-Downey Clinic
Charlotte Thurman, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Dennis Pineda Ruiz, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Emilio Letona, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Geoffrey Hughes Jr, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Janet DelRosario, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Kris Bradley, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Laura Galvez, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Maria T Dean, Kaiser-Downey Hospital
Angela Coleman, Kaiser-Fremont
David Ngo, Kaiser-Fremont
Ivy Gonzalez, Kaiser-Fremont
Jennifer Mone, Kaiser-Fremont
Melia Coker, Kaiser-Fremont
Guyen Nguyen, Kaiser-Fremont
Sheba Shofner, Kaiser-Fremont
Sunita Murti, Kaiser-Fremont
Vanessa Howard, Kaiser-Fremont
Catherine Brannigan, Kaiser-French Campus
Allison Rawitch, Kaiser-Fresno
Gina Martinez, Kaiser-Fresno
Kanwajit Kaur, Kaiser-Fresno
Marielle Del Mundo, Kaiser-Fresno
Michelle Guentz, Kaiser-Fresno
Monica Pedraza, Kaiser-Fresno
Patrick Santiago, Kaiser-Fresno
Taryn Ruiz, Kaiser-LAMC Clinics
Guy Hamrick, Kaiser-LAMC Hospital
Michael Flores, Kaiser-LAMC Hospital
Jimmie Morris, Kaiser-Manteca
Sandrine Reffell, Kaiser-Manteca
Dalsay Banara, Kaiser-Manteca
Jerry Golez, Kaiser-Manteca
Lynn Cahatol, Kaiser-Manteca

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