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April 16, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Re: Restarting and phasing in elective/non-urgent medical procedures

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write to applaud your efforts in collaboration with our neighboring states to “un-pause” the state and get New Yorkers back to work and, on behalf of our member hospitals and health systems, I would like to offer assistance in this regard.

Your leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, from initial response to the beginning phases of rebuilding, has been unmatched nationally. I was especially encouraged by your press briefing yesterday that highlighted your plan to open industries “ASAP” that are at low risk of COVID-19 infection and “more essential.”

Within this context, I urge you, after a thorough review of pertinent data, to consider prioritizing the restarting or phase-in of elective/non-urgent medical procedures that you ordered cancelled on March 25. Doing so would allow New Yorkers to receive important healthcare services that have been delayed and would also get hospital employees back to work.

Our essentiality: As evidenced by their pandemic response, hospitals are an essential part of the communities they serve. Not only do they stand ready to respond to emergencies, they also provide hospital and community-based services that keep New Yorkers healthy and safe. Hospitals are economic engines and the largest employers in most communities across the state. However, hospitals in many communities outside of the COVID-19 “hot spots” are having to furlough workers as patient volumes have declined. Being unable to perform elective/non-urgent procedures is hurting hospital finances and delaying important healthcare services to New Yorkers.

Data-driven approach to COVID infection risk: Hospitals and their workers in certain parts of the state are battling COVID-19 on an hour-to-hour basis. These hospitals and their community members must continue to be

protected by data-driven state actions and support. However, my staff's review of data related to the COVID-19 response (HERDS data) shows that the vast majority of counties in New York have low hospital occupancy rates and low COVID-19 cases/hospitalization. These data insights support the low risk of COVID-19 infection in many localities where restarting or phasing in elective/non-urgent procedures would go a long way in getting hospital employees back to work and provide some initial relief to hospital finances.

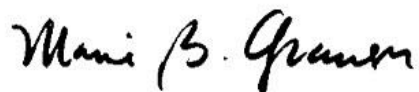
Restarting or phasing in elective/non-urgent procedures in geographic regions of the state less impacted by COVID-19 at hospitals that meet very strict clinical and safety criteria is a vital step New York can take to begin rebuilding and will allow us to move expediently to restart elective/non-urgent procedures in all parts of New York state.

I do not ask this lightly. I understand that there is still a long way to go before COVID-19 is fully behind us. I am aware of continuing supply shortages, difficulty with obtaining critical drugs and ongoing staffing challenges. There is no question that these struggles will persist in certain areas of the state for some time.

That said, we need to begin to look forward together using a data-driven approach.

Thank you for considering this important request. HANYS and our members stand ready to assist you with designing this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie B. Grause". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marie B. Grause, RN, JD
President