



**OHIO ASSOCIATION OF
MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SERVICES**

December 10, 2020

Director Stephanie McCloud
Ohio Department of Health
246 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Director McCloud:

Re: Request to Ensure DMEPOS Suppliers Included in Phase 1 Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine for Health Care First Responders in Ohio

Dear Director McCloud:

The Ohio Association of Medical Equipment Services (OAMES) is writing to request that Ohio include personnel at Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, and Orthotics (DMEPOS) suppliers in Phase 1a distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine for health care workers in our state since these individuals have a high risk of transmissions while caring for patients in the homecare setting.

OAMES is a non-profit state trade association that advocates for access to quality home medical equipment (HME) services. We represent a broad cross-section of the homecare community including HME providers as well as pharmacies, manufacturers, distributors and various service organizations.

As our great state of Ohio weighs how to prioritize the distribution of the vaccine, we urge the governor's office to follow guidance from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices at the Centers for Disease Control and prioritize DMEPOS suppliers.

DMEPOS suppliers are among the high-risk, frontline health care workers who care for COVID-19 confirmed and COVID-19 suspected individuals who do not require hospitalization as well as patients who are recovering post-hospitalization at home. DMEPOS suppliers work directly with patients with COVID-19 and provide essential equipment and services, such as home oxygen therapy, ventilators, CPAP/BiPAP, nebulizers, hospital beds, and more. The hands-on nature of providing, adjusting, and servicing many of these products in close proximity to patients subjects DMEPOS personnel to considerable risk for exposure to infected individuals.

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DMEPOS suppliers are in patients' homes every day and play a central role in helping individuals infected with COVID-19 manage their health care needs at home so that hospitals and acute care facilities have the capacity to handle those requiring more intensive care. In addition to directly interfacing with infected individuals, many of the products and services provided by DMEPOS suppliers require their staff to enter homes with other caregivers or family present to set up the equipment for use.

Given the high number of patients and other individuals that require close contact while providing care, as well as the increased risk for severe COVID-19 complications for seniors and other patient populations who depend on our products and services, it is critically important that personnel with DMEPOS suppliers are included in the first phase of distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in Ohio.

On behalf of OAMES, we request that the state extend protections to the DMEPOS community who are on the front lines of patient care to ensure they receive the protections needed to continue providing critical care via vaccination prioritization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Kalogeras". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nick Kalogeras, RPh.
OAMES President
Central Ohio Specialty Care

Cc: Kamela Yuricich, OAMES Executive Director