

Position Statement - Essential Workers Bill of Rights

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented pressures to bear upon the essential emergency support functions of our country – revealing serious gaps that need to be addressed. These essential emergency support functions facilitate the activities of our daily lives even under stay-at-home orders and quarantines. It is imperative to the care of our citizens that all Essential Workers, First Responders, Healthcare Workers and their Families be protected and supported at work and at home.

The [American Board of Physician Specialties](#) (ABPS) and the [American Academy of Physician Specialists](#) (AAPS) maintains its backing of Essential Workers, First Responders, Healthcare Workers, their Families, our Patients and Society and declares our support for the following:

1) Emergency Management Professionals, nationwide and worldwide.

These professionals have a long and impressive history of protecting citizens, property, communities, and governments. Planning, preparation, mitigation and response are the pillars of their approach for rapid and successful recovery. Emergency Managers did not wait until the current pandemic hit. Since 2002, they have been continuously applying the lessons learned from events and incidents worldwide. These professionals have globally formulated pandemic response plans, provided education, conducted exercises and established supply chains in anticipation of epidemics and viral pandemics.

2) First Responders including 911 operators, Dispatchers, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's), Paramedics, Firefighters, and Law Enforcement.

These professionals are essential resources, making a positive impact on communities both locally and globally. Law Enforcement, Firefighters, EMT's and Paramedics put their lives on the line for us each and every day. They are the first people on the scene when an emergency arises. While others may be running for cover, these brave men and women are running towards dangerous situations to save and protect the people of our communities.

3) Nurses, Therapists, Physicians, Dental Professionals, Allied Providers and Healthcare Workers across a broad spectrum of professions.

These professionals promote and restore health, prevent illness, and protect the people entrusted to their care. Despite the unprecedented pandemic workload, nurses and their colleagues alleviate the suffering experienced by individuals, families, and communities. In so doing, these healthcare heroes provide services that maintain respect for human dignity and embrace the uniqueness of each patient and the nature of his or her health problems, without restriction or regard to social or economic status.

To maximize the contributions that Essential Workers make to society, it is necessary to protect their safety, security, dignity and autonomy. **An Essential Workers Bill of Rights must include the following:**

- 1) Mandatory health and safety protections
- 2) Robust premium compensation
- 3) Protections for collective bargaining agreements
- 4) Truly universal paid sick, family and medical leave
- 5) Protections for whistleblowers
- 6) An end to worker misclassification
- 7) Healthcare security
- 8) Support for childcare
- 9) Treat workers as experts
- 10) Hold corporations accountable for meeting their responsibilities

The minimum COVID-19 health and safety protections for Essential Workers, including First Responders and Healthcare Workers must include:

- 1) Tracking of exposure and contacts
- 2) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- 3) Dispatch Protocols to identify potential COVID-19 exposures
- 4) Response Protocols to minimize COVID-19 patient contact, especially in poorly ventilated areas including responder vehicles
- 5) Training to minimize COVID-19 exposure and infection
- 6) Exposure Protocols including contact tracing, self-isolation and Return to Duty Guidelines
- 7) Communication Protocols, systems, and equipment (both internal and external)
- 8) Self-Screening procedures and equipment
- 9) State and Federal Resources locally stockpiled to meet the above needs

Steps to support Essential Workers, First Responders, Healthcare Workers are expressed below as a COVID-19 Call to Action:

- 1) Urgently prioritize ready access to sufficient quantity of high-quality and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for First responders, Nurses and other Healthcare Workers
- 2) Ensure all nurses have appropriate evidence-based infection prevention and control training and the latest COVID-19-specific guidance and training
- 3) Protect the health and well-being of Essential Workers, First responders, Nurses and other Healthcare Workers
- 4) Rapidly implement/scale-up comprehensive surveillance systems and laboratory testing to track and investigate Essential Worker, First Responder and Healthcare Worker exposure, infection and recovery

- 5) Provide a safe and effective registration and regulatory response when rapidly expanding the professional licensed healthcare workforce
- 6) Ensure a safe and effective deployment of professional licensed healthcare staff to areas of high demand and high complexity, as the need arises
- 7) Encourage, develop, and support new models of care and innovation
- 8) Demonstrate public support and recognize the value of Essential Workers, First Responders, Nurses and other Healthcare Workers to society
- 9) Develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated COVID-19 public health strategy with active engagement of licensed healthcare professionals
- 10) Learn from the COVID-19 pandemic to be prepared for the future

In addition, as board certified physicians and specialists, we declare the following:

- **We support, affirm and endorse the statements of our colleagues and teammates with respect to their rights, protection and safety in the fight against COVID-19 as expressed in this document.**
- **We stand willing, ready and able to personally interview, evaluate, examine and treat every patient who presents for care.**
- **We support and defend the professional and personal safety and security of every Healthcare Worker at every level of the healthcare system. To that end, we will act to ensure their safety and security, regardless of risks or repercussions.**
- **We support and defend the healthcare security and personal safety of every patient. To that end, we will act to ensure their safety and security, regardless of risks or repercussions.**
- **We support and defend the healthcare security and personal safety of every person who interacts with the healthcare system in any way. To that end, we will act to ensure their safety and security, regardless of risks or repercussions.**
- **We support and defend the professional and personal safety and security of every Essential Worker at every level of the economy and every aspect of the National Response Framework. To that end, we will act to ensure their safety and security, regardless of risks or repercussions.**

Unanimously resolved by our boards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JM" followed by a stylized flourish.

Jeff Morris JD, Executive Director
American Board of Physician Specialties

- **American Board of Administrative Medicine (ABAM)**
- **American Board of Disaster Medicine (ABODM)**
- **American Academy of Disaster Medicine (AADM)**
- **American Board of Integrative Medicine (ABOIM)**
- **Board of Certification in Anesthesiology (BCA)**
- **Board of Certification in Dermatology (BCD)**
- **Board of Certification in Radiology (certification in Diagnostic Radiology) (BCR)**
- **Board of Certification in Emergency Medicine (BCEM)**
- **American Academy of Emergency Physicians (AAEP)**
- **Board of Certification in Family Medicine (BCFM)**
- **Board of Certification in Family Medicine Obstetrics (BCFMO)**
- **Board of Certification in Internal Medicine (BCIM)**
- **Board of Certification in Orthopedic Surgery (BCOS)**
- **American Academy of Specialists in Surgery (AASS)**
- **Board of Certification in Urgent Care Medicine (BCUCM)**