

January 6, 2022

The Honorable Governor of State Jay Inslee  
Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Honorable Secretary of Health Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH  
Washington State Department of Health  
P.O. Box 47890  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary of Health Shah,

The time has come to officially make the call; we are in a state of crisis.

As physicians, we know when we can do no more for our patients, and that time is now. We are effectively operating crisis capacity strategies throughout our health care system. Our emergency departments are overrun, our hospitals are full. We are emotionally and physically exhausted.

We are calling on the state of Washington to officially declare this statewide crisis and to move forward immediately with resources to help overwhelmed emergency departments and hospitals and the solutions we articulate below.

For two years we have moderated our behavior by limiting or stopping our services to our patients that we felt could safely be delayed, and the negative consequences of those action have come to roost. Patients are suffering, we are suffering. Delaying or ceasing elective services and non-emergent cases to free up capacity in our hospitals has not been enough.

No physician wants to turn patients away, but we simply can't carry on this way any longer. We need your action on the following now:

- Continue or increase incentives to long-term care (LTC) providers for serving patients who are discharging from hospitals.
- Increase the budget for the Department of Social and Health Services to immediately hire more staff to facilitate transitions out of hospitals.
- Immediately address barriers to guardianship for patients who are ready to be discharged from acute care hospitals, including allowing family members to agree to transfers rather than languishing while waiting for guardians to be appointed.
- Use the national guard to assist with staffing shortages in long term care facilities and hospitals, including many non-clinical services such as patient transport, meal service, and laboratory assistance.

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The time has come to admit that stopping electives and non-urgent care is not enough. We must declare the crisis that our health system is in, provide resources to the health care community and immediately work to free up capacity in our hospitals now in order to mitigate the effects of the current surge.

Sincerely,



Mika Sinanan, MD, PhD  
President, WSMA



C. Ryan Keay, MD, FACEP  
President, WA-ACEP

cc: WA-ACEP Executive Committee  
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