April 17, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Governor Hogan,

I am President of the American Association of Dental Boards. Our organization represents the State Dental Boards across our nation. Those Boards work with each Governor to manage the Licensure of Dentists, Hygienists, Dental laboratories, etc. of the entire dental profession. We have been actively engaged in resolving the crisis of licensing of our graduating class of 2020 dental and hygiene students over the past several weeks.

Recently the profession has recognized the problem and is working hard to produce solutions within the existing model of Licensure for dentists. Now the senior class has completed their education under the purview of ADEA, the students need to complete their pathway to Licensure.

The AADB has been in collaboration with the American Student Dental Association (ASDA), American Dental Educators Association (ADEA), the five testing Agencies (the Commission on Dental Competency Assessment or CDCA, the Council of Interstate Testing Agencies or CITA, the Southern Regional Testing Agency or SRTA, the Western Regional Examination Board or WREB, the Central Regional Dental Testing Service or CRDTS), and the American Board of Dental Examiners, ADEX.

The culmination of these meetings resulted in a positive collaborative effort by all to come to the aid of the graduating Dental students including the Joint Commission National Dental Education (JCNDE). All testing agencies have made new examination models that DO NOT INVOLVE ACTUAL PATIENTS but allow the use of mankins or other means instead. In our meetings with the ASDA officers, the students’ first choice is to be able to take their Board examinations without the use of live patients. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not available. However, since our collaboration with all involved, this option is now possible.

Everyone involved in the Licensing process of our profession has now produced possible solutions to the initial problem. Of the 6500 graduating dental students, sixty percent have already been tested. The remainder may be tested easily with the new
testing guidelines that have resulted from the efforts within the profession. These exams are being formulated for May, June, July, and August. Should the country reopen soon, these tests will be in place.

It is in the best interest of the students to be able to take their examinations close to their graduation dates. Taking their Boards a year after graduation is more difficult for them. However, should the country not reopen soon then, of course, this is the next best choice.

The AADB recommends that the Governors be patiently proactive at this time. By that we mean the profession has provided viable means for licensing late Spring and Summer. It would be wise to be patient and wait a few weeks before making any final decisions knowing the testing Agencies are being proactive in providing a pathway to Licensure.

Finally, the oral health needs of each state are complex. This is why Governors historically have relied on their local experts appointed to their State Boards to help navigate the public health crises. Know this, we have done everything possible to create a viable solution to the problem. When the country reopens, the experts within the profession have created the path to resolve the problem and protect the public. The AADB appreciates the opportunity to continue to collaborate with our State Governors.

I remain at your disposal,

Robert Zena, D.M.D
President