



# AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

Dear Colleague,

Over these difficult days, the AOA is mobilizing to support and serve you, our members.

The AOA Board of Trustees has been listening closely to affiliate leaders and doctors on the front lines of care about the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our patients, our practices and our profession. Together with affiliate associations, we see, hear and understand the disruption, uncertainty and pain endured by the entire family of optometry and our country right now. In fact, it is the story of our own practices.

As you have seen, we are fighting 24/7 for optometry in Washington, D.C., to ensure that our essential care and physician role is fully recognized in emergency laws and regulations, and to directly secure federally backed loans and other crisis relief assistance for optometry practices nationwide. At an especially confusing time, we're cutting through the clutter with [up-to-the-minute practice guidance](#), [resources](#) and [expanded member benefits](#). We are also spotlighting our frontline care and the efforts of colleagues across the country to ease the burdens in local emergency departments.

Recognizing that even more action is needed now, the AOA is taking several immediate actions to ensure that our AOA is doing everything possible for every member. The board met via video conference and unanimously agreed on a comprehensive, \$5.5 million plan to fully assemble the AOA for the existential crisis our profession is now facing.

Here is a summary of board actions so far:

- **Immediate dues relief**—waiving all dues for two months for all members.
- **Dues and assessment freeze**—AOA membership dues and assessment to be maintained at current levels at least through 2021.
- **Program reprioritization**—organization-wide response to the immediate crisis-related concerns of doctors and affiliates (extending federal/state/payer/media advocacy, communications, AOAEExcel, practice tools, education and more).
- **Direct affiliate support**—establishment of a \$500,000 fund to assist distressed affiliates.
- **Long-term relief for doctors**—establishment of AOA Foundation Optometry Recovery Fund to aid optometry practices, in partnership with industry friends.

These efforts reflect the situation we're facing right now. Rather than select one possible future scenario over another, the board also agreed to continue to work closely with affiliates to determine the specific further steps that will be needed in the days, weeks and months ahead of us. As we progress through this time, we will share additional details about these actions.

No one could have predicted the events now unfolding across the country. However, thanks to years of forward thinking and preparation, the AOA has the strength, resources, reach, determination and know-how to be the advocate each of us needs to help our profession navigate this crisis.

We are united as one profession, with colleagues committed to helping and supporting colleagues. That's why our powerful message—[that we are essential care doctors committed to serving our patients, our communities and our country](#)—will continue to be [shared with policymakers](#), the news media, payers, our fellow physicians and the public.

More than ever before, we thank you for your support and involvement and for all that you do for optometry and your patients. Our thoughts will remain with you and your loved ones as well as the colleagues, patients and communities we care so deeply about.

Please continue to reach out to us directly with questions and comments at [President@AOA.org](mailto:President@AOA.org).

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Horn, O.D.  
AOA President

William T. Reynolds, O.D.  
AOA President-Elect