



April 1, 2020

Governor Bill Lee
Office of the Governor
600 Dr. Martin L King, Jr. Blvd
Nashville, TN 37243

Director Stephen Smith
Division of TennCare
310 Great Circle Rd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: Time-Sensitive – Need for Personal Protective Equipment for DMEPOS Suppliers Providing Care for Patients at Home During COVID-19 Pandemic

Governor Lee,

The Association for Tennessee Home Oxygen & Medical Equipment Services (ATHOMES) is writing to request prioritization of personal protective equipment for durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies (DMEPOS) providers who are providing essential equipment, services, and supplies for thousands of Tennessee patients in their home.

ATHOMES is the state organization representing DMEPOS providers, manufacturers, and other support service companies in the homecare community. Our members are in patients' homes every day and provide home oxygen therapy, ventilator services, hospital beds, and other items and services that allow patients to be released from hospitals, nursing homes, and other health care facilities to complete their recovery or manage their chronic condition in their homes.

The current COVID-19 outbreak presents many challenges to our health care system. Many of those with the COVID-19 diagnosis or unconfirmed cases with similar symptoms are currently being cared for at home until their condition worsens to require hospitalization. If the virus spreads and hospitals reach capacity, we will see an increased need for treatment of people at home for a number of health issues, including those directly related to COVID-19. This will put a strain on the provision of DME items and services, particularly for suppliers of home oxygen and ventilators.

It is critical to have a strong, well-supported DME infrastructure to allow patients to recover at home. These front-line health care workers need personal protective equipment in order to safely continue caring for and servicing this vulnerable patient population. DME providers are entering unknown home environments every day, providing personal care to our state's elderly and disabled population – the two hardest hit demographics of COVID-19 and most at risk for catastrophic consequences. Ensuring that DME providers have personal protective equipment helps prevent disease transmission while preventing unnecessary pathogen exposure of patients and DME health care workers.

We respectfully ask that you include the DME provider community among the priority groups receiving personal protective equipment. ATHOMES members stand ready to do its part in the fight against COVID-19; please ensure that they have the resources required for them to safely care for Tennesseans at home.

Please reach out to ATHOMES' executive director Beth Bowen to discuss further at Beth@ATHOMES.org or 919-387-1221.

Sincerely,

Beth Bowen, ATHOMES Executive Director