Dear Dr. Hatch:

The National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials (NASEMSO) has reviewed the CoAEMSP’s updated statement of 3/20/20 on COVID-19 and its impact on paramedic candidates, particularly those preparing to graduate in the next several weeks. We agree with your parent organization, CAAHEP, in their statement that “if there were ever a time for innovation, it is the present!” It appears that CAAHEP supports flexibility in this time of dire circumstances, which may include modifications to the delivery of didactic and laboratory content, as well as changes or modifications to clinical or internship experiences.

NASEMSO wishes to express concern that the CoAEMSP’s unwavering position regarding an alternate means for completing field requirements, in the wake of limited access to patients because of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be untenable. It remains unclear to us that since “Standard III.B.2.a.5) delineates that the medical director ensures the competence of each graduate of the program in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains,” why scenario-based simulation and verification by the program’s medical director should not be approved on a temporary, case-by-case basis.

In this time of extraordinary circumstances, NASEMSO feels that a greater adverse impact would be endured by the public should these candidates not be permitted to graduate until they complete all live patient encounters. This is effectively impossible with strict health procedures and restrictions in effect at facilities across the nation indefinitely. Under a state of emergency, governors are systematically authorizing the heads of agencies to waive state requirements or regulations to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, our members are preparing to allow any student who meets all other criteria for graduation from an approved paramedic education program to obtain access to state certification and state licensure. States must ensure the availability of an EMS workforce regardless of the CoAEMSP stance on clinical and capstone field internships.
During this public health emergency, we hope the CoAEMSP will team with state directors who are tasked with finding innovative ways to appropriately license EMS caregivers. We ask the CoAEMSP to support scenario-based simulation and credentialing by the EMS medical director when live patient encounters cannot be accomplished.

Public protection is a key mission for state health departments, state public safety agencies, and state EMS officials. We look forward to working with our national EMS partners finding creative ways to meet this mission, and respond to this unprecedented crisis.

Sincerely,

Kyle L. Thornton, President
National Association of State EMS Officials

Copy:

William Seifarth, Executive Director
National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians

Kathleen Megivern, Executive Director
Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs