

Via Electronic Transmission

October 21, 2021

The Honorable Tate Reeves
Governor, State of Mississippi
P.O. Box 139
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

The Honorable Delbert Hosemann
Lieutenant Governor, State of Mississippi
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, Mississippi 39215

The Honorable Philip Gunn
Speaker, Mississippi House of Representatives
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, Mississippi 39215

Re: Winter Hospital Bed Capacity and Nurse Retention Program

Dear Governor Reeves, Lieutenant Governor Hosemann and Speaker Gunn,

The staffing shortage for Mississippi hospitals exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic has been well documented over the last several months. In the first 7 months of 2021, Mississippi lost approximately 2,000 actively licensed registered nurses. Every indicator supports an even greater decline in the foreseeable future. We write to both alert you to the forecasted bed capacity shortfalls for the upcoming months and to also stress the urgent need once again for state assistance in maintaining nursing staff.

Chief Nursing Officers are predicting that staff shortages will result in closing over 500 acute care hospital beds over the upcoming months. The shortage is driven by losses in the nursing workforce which are attributable to burnout, fatigue and, to a growing extent, nurses who took travel nursing positions and made significantly higher wages and now desire to take time off. While the travel nurses were needed in various parts of the country over the last several months, the exorbitantly high rates which were heavily subsidized by federal dollars resulted in travel nurses being paid so much that they can now afford to not return to work.

It's hard to blame any healthcare worker for needing to take off. Front line workers are exhausted from working incredibly long hours during the last several months. Additionally, there is a mental and emotional toll, even trauma, from seeing patients, particularly younger patients, die from COVID. These nurses have been the link between the patients and their loved ones who were unable to sit by their bedside as they died horribly lonely deaths from COVID.

The State of Mississippi has received more than \$2 billion in federal funds for Pandemic/Economic Relief including monies allocated to the state by the CARES Act (\$1.25 billion) and the American Rescue Plan (\$1.8 billion). We are asking that you set aside a portion of those funds to quickly establish a program to incent healthcare workers, particularly nurses, to

remain in and return to their hospitals. Our hospitals are doing their best, but their funds are also limited, and the costs of labor has increased significantly. Such a program would demonstrate your commitment to and appreciation of those workers who have taken care of all of us during the pandemic. These are the workers who have healed and comforted over the last eighteen months and who will be relied upon to continue doing so in the months ahead.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and are always available to discuss this further with you.

Sincerely,

Timothy H. Moore
President / CEO, MHA

Amy Lampton Walker, FNP-BC
CNO, Delta Health Systems

Betty Cryer, MSN, RN
CNO, Anderson Regional Medical Center

Leigh Ann Posey, BSN, RN
CNO, Alliance Health Center

Scott Breazeale, MSN, RN
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Deena Branum, BSN, RN
DON, Pearl River County Hospital

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CNO, Wayne General Hospital

Annelise Jensen, MBA, BSN, RN
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Hollie Bell, RN
DON, Yalobusha General Hospital

Kim W. Hoover, PhD, RN
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Susan Russell, MSN, RN, CCRN-CSC
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Nicole Pace, RN
Alliance Healthcare Systems

Hannah Barrett, BSN, RN
CNO, North Sunflower Medical Center

Carol Anne Hart, BSN, RN
CNO, Tippah County Hospital

Lynn Scott, RN
DON, Covington County Hospital

Teresa Jones, MSN, RN, CNORE
Nurse Executive, MS State Hospital