



Minnesota Hospital Association

2550 University Ave. W., Suite 350-S
St. Paul, MN 55114-1900

phone: (651) 641-1121; fax: (651) 659-1477
toll-free: (800) 462-5393; www.mnhospitals.org

**Frontline Worker Pay Working Group
August 10, 2021
On behalf of the Minnesota Hospital Association**

Madame Chair, Mr. Chair and Working Group members:

My name is Mary Krinkie, and I am the Vice President of Government Relations for the Minnesota Hospital Association. Thank you for this opportunity to share information about hospitals and our frontline caregivers.

This work you are doing is more important to us now – than we thought it would be even a month ago. The swift turn of events, as we are now in COVID surge number 4, has been disheartening for our health care workers who just weeks ago thought that the battle against COVID was in its final stages. Our staffs are at the point of exhaustion. The situation is made more complicated with labor shortages – the likes of which we haven't seen for some time.

A payment to our frontline health care workers will not solve these challenges. However, we are hopeful, that such a payment is a way of saying as a society we are thankful for the work you have done and the work you are continuing to do.

I know several Working Group members have expressed that there may not be enough resources to include all essential workers and that more money may be needed. That may be the case, and there are still resources in the state account from the American Rescue Plan and additional money could be allocated. However, MHA thinks it is important that the distribution of this \$250 million is prioritized for those workers who as the legislative language instructs... had "increased risk of virus exposure due to the nature of their work." Clearly, hospital employees who were public facing and involved in patient care should be included. Their work is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Let me describe what a hospital care team does when caring for a patient who has COVID pneumonia. The nurses, nursing assistants, physicians, therapists, environmental professionals in our Emergency Departments, medical units and ICUs lean in and serve the patient -- from helping her breathe, to helping her move, to helping her eat and in so many cases working heroically to save her life. We recognize that the pandemic clearly has affected many industries but given the tireless and selfless service of our care teams it is critical to show that society cares and that their service and efforts matter.

As of last Friday, 33,578 individuals with COVID have been cared for in Minnesota hospitals, with some 6,808 receiving that care in an Intensive Care Unit. To date, every single person who has needed a hospital level of care with COVID in Minnesota has been placed and cared for in a Minnesota hospital bed. This care has been made possible because of our dedicated employees.

I would like to share some key employee numbers and salary information with the Working Group.

Hospitals and health systems employ some 125,000 individuals. That number includes physicians, members of our management teams and administrative staff. While they too have contributed greatly over the past 18 months, they are not listed below because they did not have either direct risk or potentially did not have increased financial burden.