



December 1, 2021

Good morning Chairman Albert and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Ane McNeil, Chief Human Resources Officer for Trinity Health Michigan. As you may know, Trinity Health Michigan includes eight hospitals comprised of Mercy Health in West Michigan and St. Joseph Mercy Health system in Southeast Michigan and we employ over 24,000 employees across our statewide footprint. I appreciate the opportunity this morning to share some of the ongoing challenges we face in retaining and attracting health professionals across our eight sites and our two wholly owned Medical Groups.

I would like to highlight a few critical challenges:

**Our workforce challenges and those of the healthcare industry existed well before the pandemic**

Health care workforce challenges have only been exacerbated by COVID-19. Front-line caregivers are worn-out and burned-out. Workers are struggling with work-life balance, resilience, and pandemic fatigue. The entire workforce is again challenged as our state endures another surge. Increased numbers of providers have left the workforce since the beginning of the pandemic and, according to the National Organization of Nursing Leadership, 20% of nurses are reporting they intend to leave the profession within the next year. Over 1 million new registered nurses will be needed by 2030. Additionally, other licensed and non-licensed healthcare professionals will be needed for healthcare organizations to care for their patients and communities.

**Let me share our current stats:**

- 370 HCWs Quarantined (Confirmed positive or suspected)
- Number of vacant positions has increased by 48% since the pandemic and 60% for RN vacancies (1558 to 3000 open positions, 386 to 1000 RN positions)
- Overall turnover has increased by 22% since 2019
- Overall RN turnover has increased by 45% since 2019 (Majority of RNs are taking positions with contract labor agencies for increased pay- employers are unable to compete.
- COVID Vaccine Requirement resulted in less than 1% turnover (172 of which 35 were RN positions: 51 Terminations; 121 Voluntary)

**We have employed a variety of strategies internally to address these challenges, both short term and long term.** To address these shortages, Trinity Health Michigan deployed many strategies from redeploying staff, training administrative staff to support in clinical areas (tray passing, collecting trash, screening, etc.) prior to the pandemic created a mobile workforce (FirstChoice); created flexible and per-diem shifts for recently retired, nursing students and others; provided incentives to colleagues to pick up additional shifts; brought in outside contract labor; invested in workforce training programs; and leveraged telehealth and virtual care modalities. At the Trinity Health National level, we have implemented a Retention and Attraction Emergence team focused on 8 initiatives from Workforce Development Programs to Innovative Care Models). Over the last 18 months, Trinity Health Michigan has invested over \$100 M in workforce programs such salary and wage programs, two all employee recognition awards, incentives, retention, referral and sign-on pay programs. **However, these measures are not fully sufficient to address the workforce shortages currently faced.** While Trinity Health Michigan will continue to look for ways to invest in our people, we are asking for your continued support and partnership.



**We know that there are a variety of short-term and long-term strategies in the public policy arena that are needed to address the shortage of health professionals now and in the years to come.**

***What can you do as our policy makers?***

*Support Workforce Through COVID19 Pandemic & Build and Maintain a Strong Workforce Pipeline*

- Additional funding for:
  - Hiring and retention pay programs
  - Funding to help offset external contract labor costs
  - Provide funding for educational loan pay-downs and vouchers for clinicians and other front-line workers across the care continuum
  - Fund new and existing clinical care models that use a multi-disciplinary team and technology.
  - Fund the development of "earn and learn" programs that allow individuals to earn an income while gaining work experience and education, like apprenticeships.
- Support efforts to facilitate health care worker movement across states, including expedited licensure review and expansion of licensure compacts. Licensure flexibility is essential for employers.
- Provide grants to expand, modernize and support schools of medicine and nursing
  - **Support BSN programs at community colleges**
- Address the unsustainable steep increases with contract labor. Nursing staff agency rates have increased by more than 60% since March 2021.

**Federal Level**

- Reauthorize the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Titles VII and VIII workforce programs Provide expedited visa relief for foreign health care workers.
  - Loan repayment and scholarships for nurses
  - Loans for nursing faculty development
  - Advanced education nursing grants
  - Grants for increasing workforce diversity
  - Nurse education, practice, quality, and retention grants.
- Provide expedited visa relief to foreign health care workers, placing them in the First Tier for priority
  - There has never been a more urgent need for the care that foreign trained nurses can provide especially with the continued surges

Last year our focus was having adequate supply of personal protection equipment, today we are in a *healthcare-giver crisis*. Hospital systems are losing staff to travel agencies paying high wages and gauging employers and we are challenged with staffing to care for our patients. The risk is limiting services that would otherwise be available to the community. With your support we can focus on reinventing Michigan's Workforce Development; pipeline growth, upskilling and reskilling workers; investing in educational programs and providing funding to employers and academic institutions; ensuring our healthcare-givers begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

My deepest gratitude to each of you for providing me the platform to provide you with the challenges and support needed as we work together during this critical inflection point in our state.

I will pause for questions or comments. Thank you.