

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 10, 2020**

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## **NYS Health Facilities Association Issues Statement on Current State of COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Albany New York** — Stephen Hanse, President & CEO of the New York State Health Facilities Association and the New York State Center for Assisted Living (NYSHFA/NYSCAL) issued the following statement in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in New York long term care facilities:

“New York’s health care system is under attack from the COVID-19 pandemic. This virus is the greatest public health threat our country has faced in most of our lifetimes. Our dedicated health care workers at skilled nursing and assisted living facilities are on the front line of this pandemic. These courageous men and women leave their families each day to selflessly provide essential care for our most vulnerable citizens.

“The outbreaks happening in long term care facilities are not the result of inattentiveness or a shortcoming in the care provided. Outbreaks occur due to the combination of the behavior of this virus and the unique threat it presents to the people we care for—older adults with multiple underlying health conditions. Long term care facilities desperately need priority testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) if we are to stop this virus.

“Healthcare workers in long term care work around the clock to provide physical, psychological, and compassionate care to residents in normal times and now during an incredibly stressful situation. Not only are these heroic staff providing one-on-one care, they are filling the void of residents’ families who are not allowed to visit during this quarantine. The CNAs, LPNs, RNs, and all of the staff are sitting at the bedside, engaging with severely ill residents, so they are not alone. Staff are developing new ways for families to connect and communicate with their loved ones; keeping families informed of changes in condition; and trying desperately to bring some normalcy and calm to residents’ lives who have little understanding about the world events surrounding them.

“Preventing and containing the spread of COVID-19 is incredibly difficult in a long term care setting. For most providers, they are shifting to a containment strategy, so they can provide the highest level of protection to their staff residents. Even with precautions in place, the virus is infecting both residents and staff. As a result, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services

(CMS), and the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH), have issued unprecedented waivers to assist our health care providers, staff and residents during this pandemic.

“Additionally, Governor Cuomo, CMS, NYSDOH, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are doing all they can to provide the necessary PPE and supplies to health care staff and first responders. When supplies are short, staff are following CDC guidance to conserve the use of PPE or creatively use other apparel to provide a level of protection. In a crisis of this magnitude, we must prioritize needs, find innovative solutions to problems and work together as one team. “The New York State Health Facilities Association and the New York State Center for Assisted Living (NYSHFA/NYSCAL) represent over 450 skilled nursing and assisted living communities throughout New York. We are so grateful for the heroic efforts of our health care workers, who in the face of COVID-19 perform as first responders in providing care.

“Nursing homes and assisted living communities are doing everything they can with the resources they have been given to slow the acceleration of the virus for our residents. The most helpful thing any advocacy group or media outlet can do right now is encourage people to stay home to flatten the curve as soon as possible.”

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