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NYS Health Facilities Association Statement on COVID-19 Pandemic in Long Term Care Facilities

Albany, New York — Stephen Hanse, President and 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 rising number of COVID-19 outbreaks and fatalities in New York’s nursing homes and assisted living communities:

“We continue to be deeply concerned about the high mortality rate and how widespread COVID-19 has become in long-term care facilities and our collective hearts ache for those who have lost loved ones to this insidious virus.

“Nursing homes and assisted living providers are among the most heavily regulated industries in our State. Throughout this pandemic, nursing homes and assisted living providers have been following the Governor’s Executive Order and notifying designated family members or next of kin within 24 hours if any resident tests positive for COVID-19, or if any resident suffers a COVID-19 related death. Moreover, nursing homes have been closely adhering to both DOH and CDC directives and policies.

“Outbreaks of COVID-19 are not the result of inattentiveness or shortcomings in our facilities. The very nature of long-term care is a high touch environment where social distancing is not an option in providing care. Staff are hands-on helping residents with bathing, dressing, eating and other personal daily needs.

“From the onset of this pandemic, nursing homes and assisted living providers and their residents have not been treated as a top priority for assistance with staffing, PPE shortages and COVID-19 testing.

“This was clearly evidenced by the State’s March 25th policy mandating that nursing homes admit hospital patients into their facilities that have a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of COVID-19. This treacherous virus spreads through nursing homes like fire through dry grass and the State’s March 25th policy served to unnecessarily fan the flames of this fire.

“The Governor stated that nursing homes are the State’s #1 concern. This declaration must be followed up with full support and assistance from the State in the form of increased help in securing staff, needed PPE and priority testing for our residents and employees.

“Nursing homes and hospitals are all highly regulated mission driven organizations. It is wrong for the State to single out nursing homes and say they are ‘private companies,’ and as such, nursing homes are on their own to secure needed PPE to safeguard their residents and staff.

“We must work together in close partnership and coordination with the Governor and the DOH to protect our residents and defeat this virus. We are counting on the Governor’s leadership and hope all New Yorkers rally around long term care residents and caregivers.”

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