



January 17, 2022

**Re: Solutions to the Healthcare Workforce Crisis**

Dear Governor Murphy, Commissioner Persichilli, Commissioner Adelman, Commissioner Asaro-Angelo, Commissioner Allen-McMillan, and Acting Director Neafsey,

As leaders of our state’s major healthcare associations, we write to you regarding the healthcare workforce crisis and operational challenges facing the critical industry we represent. While attracting and retaining a qualified workforce has long been a concern for New Jersey’s healthcare industry, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the true crisis facing the industry. We are at a critical juncture in which our state must act to develop long- and short-term solutions to support the healthcare workforce and protect public health here in New Jersey.

There are many actions that can be taken in the short term to assist the industry. Many states, such as Pennsylvania and New Hampshire, have extended temporary waivers that allowed for flexibility in healthcare settings. We thank you for extending crucial waivers, administrative orders and directives impacting the healthcare industry in order to allow providers to remain fully operational as they care for an influx of patients due to the omicron variant. Additionally, we ask the Administration to assess which orders can be made permanent in order to eliminate unnecessary red tape and allow healthcare professionals to care for patients in the most effective and efficient manner beyond the pandemic. Examples of such orders that will combat the workforce shortage are those addressing license reciprocity, staffing ratios, administration of COVID-19 tests and vaccines and telehealth. Additionally, we appreciate your recent announcement to deploy the National Guard to support long-term care facilities. We ask you to consider deploying the National Guard and/or FEMA to other areas of the healthcare industry on an as-needed basis to fill employment gaps similar to measures taken in Kentucky and Washington. New Jersey still has the third highest unemployment rate in the nation. We suggest the Department of Labor works with healthcare stakeholders to identify unemployed individuals who can be trained to work in various jobs in healthcare facilities. Lastly, immediate financial assistance from American Rescue Plan Act funding can be used to stabilize the industry. The state of Texas has spent \$7 billion in federal pandemic relief funds to hire temporary nurses, respiratory therapists, and doctors to support hospitals and an additional \$400 million to address staffing shortages in long-term care facilities. Georgia spent \$125 million to hire 1,500 temporary hospital workers. Similar funding in New Jersey can provide immediate incentives for employees to work in this critical sector.

In the long term, New Jersey must develop a concerted effort with all stakeholder groups to attract and retain workers in the healthcare industry. Many states, including New Jersey, have begun investing in workforce development efforts in healthcare. Through the New Jersey Pathways and Skills Collaborative, NJBIA and our state's community colleges are forming partnerships across four key growth industries, including healthcare, to equip the workforce with in-demand stackable credentials to fulfill our state's most pressing workforce needs. We are thankful to the Legislature for making an \$8.5 million investment in this training initiative and are excited for the opportunities this program will bring to New Jerseyans and the business community. In order to build upon this program and further incentivize individuals to enter healthcare professions, we urge the Administration to implement additional comprehensive support for the industry. For example, in New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul recently announced a multifaceted \$10 billion plan to increase New York's healthcare workforce by 20% over the next 5 years. The plan includes \$4 billion to support employee wages and bonuses and \$2 billion for improving the healthcare infrastructure. Governor Hochul's plan also includes providing financial support to students pursuing degrees in healthcare. Lastly, we urge the Administration to address licensure reforms where appropriate to allow for greater flexibility and opportunities in the workforce. One such area would be to pursue dual licensure for certified nursing assistants and certified homemaker-home health aides. Additionally, we strongly encourage the Department of Education and the Department of Health work with our associations to ensure all appropriate incentives, funding and curriculum standards are in place to support certified nursing assistant and certified homemaker-home health aide advancement. Taking these steps will help provide robust support for current industry professionals and support the expansion of the healthcare workforce.

Thank you for taking our concerns and suggestions into consideration. We respectfully request a meeting to further discuss how our industry and the Administration can work together to develop a plan to solve this immediate crisis. If you have any questions, please contact Chrissy Buteas, NJBIA Chief Government Affairs Officer, at [cbuteas@njbias.org](mailto:cbuteas@njbias.org).

Sincerely,

Frank Preston, President, ACI Medical and Dental School

Brian Oliviera, Pharm.D., Executive Director, Garden State Pharmacy Owners, Inc. (GSPO)

Andrew Aronson, President and CEO, Health Care Association of New Jersey (HCANJ)

Nancy Fitterer, M.A., President & CEO, Home Care & Hospice Association of New Jersey

James McCracken, President and CEO, LeadingAge NJ & DE

Chrissy Buteas, Chief Government Affairs Officer, New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA)

James Schulz, Director of Government & Public Affairs, New Jersey Dental Association (NJDA)

Theresa Edelstein, Senior Vice President, New Jersey Hospital Association (NJHA)

Elise Barry, CEO, New Jersey Pharmacists Association (NJPhA)

CC:

George Helmy, Chief of Staff, Governor Murphy

Parimal Garg, Chief Counsel, Governor Murphy

Kaylee McQuire, Senior Policy Advisor

Senate President Nicholas Scutari

Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin

Senate Minority Leader Steve Oroho

Assembly Minority Leader John DiMaio

Senate and Assembly Health Committees

Jennifer Langer Jacobs, Medicaid Director, New Jersey Department of Human Services

Steve Finkel, Director of Legislative Affairs, New Jersey Department of Law & Public Safety