North Carolina Healthcare Association Statement Supporting COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements for Hospital and Health System Employees

North Carolina's hospitals and health systems exist to improve and protect the health of our communities, which is why they place patient, visitor, and team member health and safety at the heart of the care they provide. In keeping with that goal, the North Carolina Healthcare Association strongly supports hospital and health system policies that require all hospital employees and clinical team members to be vaccinated against COVID-19. NCHA recognizes that each hospital and health system is unique and encourages each to determine the appropriate time to implement a requirement. All hospitals should continue to require other infection control measures per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, such as wearing masks and other personal protective gear.

Our state's health systems and hospitals have seen first-hand how debilitating and deadly this disease can be. When the COVID-19 vaccines were first released, the NCHA and its members strongly encouraged all North Carolinians, including hospital and health system employees, to get vaccinated against COVID-19. In the months since, clinical data has shown the COVID-19 vaccines to be extraordinarily safe and effective and our best tool to prevent spread of the disease.

The evidence is clear – vaccination against COVID-19 has prevented people from becoming seriously ill, requiring hospitalization, or dying from the virus, as well as spreading it to others. To date, more than 4.7 million North Carolinians and more than 161 million Americans have been vaccinated with minimal side effects. Most concerning, however, is the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services reporting that nearly 99% of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths during May and June were among people not fully vaccinated. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported a sharp rise in new coronavirus cases as the delta variant becomes increasingly pervasive.

Protecting patients, visitors and healthcare personnel from COVID-19 continues to be of paramount importance. Hospital and health system employee vaccination against COVID-19 is vital to safely care for patients by protecting them from infection, and to mitigate the spread of the virus within healthcare facilities and among clinicians, patients and their families and friends.

The NCHA was founded during the 1918 influenza pandemic during which more than 13,600 North Carolinians died, many of them caregivers. To date during the coronavirus pandemic, North Carolina has seen nearly that exact same number of deaths. Our state now has ample access to vaccines that can prevent more hospitalizations and needless deaths. We urge all hospitals and health systems to stay on the leading edge of public health advocacy to curb the spread of the coronavirus, including by updating infection control policies to promote employee vaccination.

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