Trinity Health is one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation, serving diverse communities that include more than 30 million people across 22 states. We advocate for public policies that promote care for the common good including expanding health care coverage and care, investing in public health, paying for high-value care, and improving the health of communities.

The men and women religious who founded Trinity Health early ministries were healers, engaged in nursing for those who are poor, the elderly and the disadvantaged. This commitment dates back to the 1800s and includes the establishment of schools of nursing including current academic institutions such as Mount Carmel College of Nursing in Ohio, and Loyola University Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing in Illinois.

COVID-19 Pandemic Escalates Workforce Shortages
Health care workforce shortages in our country are not new; however, over the last several years shortages have increased due to accelerating turnover, a dearth of nursing educators, lower enrollment rates in nursing school, and an aging workforce.

Health care workforce challenges have only been exacerbated by COVID-19. Front-line caregivers are worn-out and burned-out. 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. Front-line workers are also struggling with work-life balance, resilience and pandemic fatigue. The entire workforce is again challenged as the nation endure continued surges.

To address these shortages, Trinity Health has moved staff from ambulatory care settings to acute care; created a mobile workforce with redeployed colleagues across the country from one region to another; created flexible and per-diem shifts for recently retired, nursing students and others; provided incentives to colleagues; brought in outside contract labor; invested in workforce training programs; and leveraged telehealth and virtual care modalities. However, these measures are not sufficient to address the workforce shortages currently faced.

What Can Policymakers Do?
Address Current COVID-19 Surge Crisis
- Provide funding for educational loan pay-downs and vouchers for clinicians and other front-line workers across the care continuum
- Provide expedited visa relief for foreign health care workers.
- Urge the Department of Health and Human Services to release unallocated Provider Relief Fund dollars to cover significant workforce costs associated with COVID-19.
- Consider using active-duty troops to reinforce the health care workforce to mitigate the risk that deploying National Guard/Reserve troops could take front-line workers out of hospitals.

Support Workforce through COVID-19 Pandemic
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement to support higher staff wages in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.
- Provide financial incentives for front-line health care workers to stay in their positions throughout remainder of public health emergency.
- Provide funding for research and demonstration programs related to clinician wellbeing.
- Support efforts to facilitate health care worker movement across states, including expedited licensure review and expansion of licensure compacts.
Trinity Health: Health Care Workforce Challenges

**Build and Maintain a Strong Workforce Pipeline**
- Maintain telehealth flexibilities and incentivize investments in accessible technology such as applications that support remote monitoring and virtual caregiving.
- Increase the number of residency slots eligible for Medicare funding.
- Reject reductions to Medicare funding for direct and indirect graduate medical education.
- Reauthorize the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Titles VII and VIII workforce programs.
- Provide grants to expand, modernize and support schools of medicine and nursing, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Create incentives for health systems to establish nursing residency programs and create additional clinical placements.
- Provide funding for nursing faculty recruitment including development programs and financial incentives.
- Fund new and existing clinical care models that use a multi-disciplinary team.
- Allow nurses and other clinicians to practice in collaborative, team-based environments according to their highest level of education, training and licensure.
- Fund the development of "earn and learn" programs that allow individuals to earn income while gaining work experience and education, like apprenticeships.
- Expand workforce training capacity by growing real-time labor force data, supporting reskilling programs including digital skill needs and providing tax incentives for training programs led by industry, educators and non-profit organizations.
- Build a diverse health care workforce that understands community needs and can build relationships and trust.
- Establish grants for cultural and linguistic competency training in medical residency programs and in-service training for health care professionals.

**Trinity Health Workforce Best Practices**

**Supporting Colleague Well-Being During COVID-19 and Beyond: Colleague Care Program (CCP)** In response to the potential for pandemic-related post-traumatic stress (PTS)/post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among colleagues, in June 2020, Trinity Health launched a system-wide Colleague Care Program. CCP Teams ensure that all colleagues—particularly those working in high stress, demanding units—are supported through a variety of onsite, supportive and comfort services designed to alleviate some of the emotional and physiological stressors that could negatively impact caregivers. The program includes Resiliency Rounding: a real-time human one-on-one connection to colleagues in high-volume, highly demanding areas either in person, virtually or telephonically.

**Solving Workforce Shortages to Scale: *FirstChoice** Trinity Health rapidly expanded FirstChoice—a clinical staffing agency—in multiple markets as well as implemented a national travel program. The FirstChoice Travel Program allows Trinity Health to utilize its nurses and clinicians, such as respiratory therapists, in hospitals experiencing COVID-19 patient surges. As a result, nearly 200 Trinity Health nurses and clinicians answered the call to serve alongside colleagues in some of the hardest-hit communities.

**Creating Innovative Approaches to Care Delivery via Virtually Integrated Care:** MercyOne Des Moines, Iowa, built a connected care model using video conferencing technology to address staffing shortages and capacity constraints. Patient rooms are equipped with all-in-one computers that connect to a virtual registered nurse (VRN) to provide a seamless patient experience. The virtual care team can provide services including admission and discharge, provider rounding, pharmacy consultation and other support services.

**Implementing Workforce Development Programs:** Trinity Health's programs are designed to up-skill front-line workers and close the workforce equity gap. This includes apprenticeships that allow individuals to earn income while gaining work experience and education.

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**Mission**

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

**Core Values**

Reverence • Commitment to Those Who Are Poor • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity

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