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July 20, 2020

Howard Zucker, Commissioner  
New York State Department of Health  
Corning Tower  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Commissioner Zucker,

We are writing regarding the study of health care staffing “enhancements and initiatives” that was mandated in the FY 2020 Budget in April 2019. Part KK of bill A2007C of 2019 provided that the Department of Health would commence the study no later than May 1, 2019 and would “report its findings and recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Health and to the Temporary President of the Senate and Speaker of the Assembly no later than December 31, 2019.”

We are now well past six months past this deadline. Undoubtedly many hours of DoH staff time, as well as the time of numerous members of our organizations and members of the public, has been dedicated to gathering and analyzing data, research and accounts of personal experiences regarding adequate staffing levels in New York State’s health care institutions. More importantly, while the Covid-19 pandemic represented (we hope) a once-in-a-lifetime health care crisis that brought the state’s hospital and nursing home system to the brink of disaster, we believe it also exposed critical long-term shortcomings in health care staffing. The New York Times recently reported that dramatic differences in staffing levels between New York City hospitals undoubtedly contributed to shocking differences in Covid-19 mortality rates in these hospitals. (“Why Surviving the Virus Might Come Down to Which Hospital Admits You”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/nyregion/Coronavirus-hospitals.html>). The pandemic offered new and tragic proof that staffing is a life and death issue.

Our members are still reeling from the terrible, heart-rending experience of working through the Covid-19 pandemic. They are suffering from fatigue, burnout and PTSD. They are more worried than ever that short staffing will make it impossible for them to do their jobs the way they should be done, now or when the inevitable Covid-19 resurgence occurs.

We therefore write to urge you to release the Staffing study immediately and to work with our unions to begin to address the problem of inadequate staffing which plagues hospitals and nursing homes across New York State.

Respectfully,



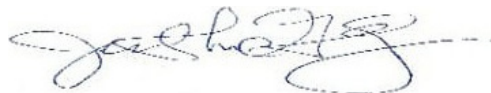
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