



**House Majority Policy Committee Hearing
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Good morning Chairman Causer, Representative Mehaffie, members of the House Majority Policy Committee, and staff. Welcome to the Penn State Health Hershey Medical Center campus. I am Deborah Addo, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of Penn State Health.

I want to commend Representative Mehaffie and the Committee leadership for recognizing the important and urgent nature of the crisis facing the healthcare industry, not only in our region, but across the Commonwealth and our country, regarding the shortage of workers across the health care continuum.

We know that a talented, qualified and diverse workforce is at the heart of an engaged and vibrant health system. However, our hospitals are now facing mounting and critical staffing shortages that could jeopardize access to care in the communities we serve.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on health care teams who have been on the front lines of the pandemic with many suffering from stress, trauma, burnout and increased behavioral health challenges. A 2021 Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that nearly 30% of health care workers are considering leaving their profession altogether, and nearly 60% reported impacts to their mental health stemming from their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the daunting challenge of sustaining the health care workforce predates the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the American Hospital Association, we will need to hire at least 200,000 nurses per year in the United States to meet increased demand and to replace retiring nurses. There are also critical shortages of allied health and behavioral health professionals, especially in historically marginalized rural and urban communities.

These workforce shortages, combined with an aging population, a rise in chronic disease and behavioral health conditions, and advancements in the “state-of-the-art” of care delivery, all contribute to the need for supportive policies so that our country’s and our commonwealth’s health care workforce can ensure access to care and be adequately prepared for the delivery system of the future.

At Penn State Health, we recently opened a new, state-of-the-art acute care hospital in Hampden Township, Cumberland County. We began recruitment efforts almost a year in advance of the October 1st opening and are still working diligently to find staff to fully meet the needs of the 110-bed facility. Over the past twelve months we have increased talent acquisition marketing efforts while creating unique and new recruitment strategies. In less than a year, we plan to open another acute care hospital in Lancaster County and based on the national staffing trends and those we experience regionally, we anticipate that we will continue to experience increased challenges in recruiting and retention of staff. We remain committed to serving the healthcare needs of our community with a full and engaged team at Penn State Health.

The looming healthcare workforce crisis requires a collaborative approach. The answers will not be easily found but that does not mean we stop looking or stop asking hard questions. In fact, we must continue to ask questions and act quickly. I am extremely grateful for the House Majority Policy Committee's interest in learning more about the extremely serious and timely issue confronting the healthcare industry, and ultimately the citizens of the Commonwealth. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to address any questions from the Committee members.