

CHA Media Statement

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Nurses' Union Attack Untrue, Irresponsible in Midst of COVID-19 Crisis

"Accusations being made by one nurses' union are false — and worse, irresponsible — in the middle of the greatest health crisis in generations," said Carmela Coyle, President & CEO of the California Hospital Association. In response to the California Nurses Association's claims that CHA is "exploiting the pandemic to undermine California's landmark safe staffing standards," Coyle said, "Nothing could be further from the truth."

"What nurses, doctors, hospitals and state officials are all doing is our absolute best to save lives and care for every Californian in need," Coyle said. "Now is the time for everyone to come together to care for this tsunami of COVID patients."

"To do this, it's imperative that the political attacks stop and we all focus on patients," Coyle said.

Here are the facts:

- There is a serious shortage of critical care nurses — highly trained, specialized professionals — whose ranks have been stretched thin by nearly a year of COVID care, illness, retirement, family needs, and more.
- The current crisis is **three times larger** than COVID-19's earlier surge this past summer (*new COVID-19 cases are topping 32,000 daily, and there were nearly 16,000 hospitalizations on Tuesday alone*).
- The state has granted a **temporary variance** from nurse staffing ratios that applies **only to the units in which COVID patients** are being cared for in hospitals.
- California's ability to care for COVID-19 patients depends on staff, not beds. Without this temporary staffing flexibility, very sick patients will wait on gurneys in the emergency department until a specially trained ICU nurse is available. (*As of Tuesday, two regions in the state — San Joaquin Valley and Southern CA — were below 2% ICU capacity because of lack of available staff.*)

"This should be a moment when nurses, doctors, hospital leaders and state officials all stand together in the effort to save lives," Coyle said.

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