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CONTACT: Paris Ervin

(217) 541-1153

pervin@team-iha.org

Illinois Hospital Leaders to Discuss Top Healthcare Priorities with State Legislators During IHA's Advocacy Day

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois hospital and health system leaders are calling on the General Assembly to pass several bills that will increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for hospitals, help deter violence against healthcare workers, and address staffing challenges to ensure hospitals can continue to provide access to quality healthcare for patients in all Illinois communities.

On Wednesday, April 19, nearly 100 leaders of hospital and health systems from across the state will meet with legislators from their respective districts during Hospital Advocacy Day organized by the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA).

“We are grateful for the opportunity to meet with members of the Illinois General Assembly to outline the many challenges hospitals are still facing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, including growing cost pressures, physical and verbal assault against healthcare workers, and staffing shortages,” said A.J. Wilhelmi, IHA President and CEO. “We must work together to address these critical issues to advance health, ensure equity, keep our healthcare workforce strong and safe, and protect access to patient care in all Illinois communities.”

During Hospital Advocacy Day, hospital and health system leaders will urge members of the Illinois General Assembly to vote in support of the following healthcare bills:

- **Senate Bill 1763**, sponsored by Sen. Ann Gillespie (D – Arlington Heights) and Sen. Dave Syverson (R-Rockford), advances a 20% increase to hospital Medicaid reimbursement rates. Without additional state support, access to care will continue to suffer as hospitals are forced to close units, limit services or, in extreme cases, consider closure. The bipartisan legislation would provide the first General Revenue Fund (GRF) Medicaid base rate increase for hospitals in 28 years.
- To deter the increasingly vicious physical, emotional and verbal attacks, IHA introduced **Senate Bill 1863** to make it clear that those who harm healthcare professionals will be held accountable under the law. The commonsense bipartisan legislation, sponsored by Sen. John F. Curran (R-Lemont) and Bill Cunningham (D-Chicago), includes violence against a healthcare worker in a healthcare setting as an aggravating factor a judge can consider during sentencing.
- **House Bill 559**, sponsored by Rep. Bob Morgan (D-Highwood), allows providers holding temporary out-of-state licenses the opportunity to apply for a permanent Illinois license and to continue to work for up to an additional 12 months until the Illinois Dept. of

Financial & Professional Regulation (IDFPR) issues the permanent license or denies the application. The legislation extends similar flexibilities to providers seeking reinstatement of their Illinois license. In light of the state's well-documented healthcare worker shortage, this legislation offers a commonsense winding down period for healthcare professionals currently working in the state's hospitals on a temporary COVID-19 out-of-state license. House Bill 559 supports hospital and health systems' efforts to sustain and grow the state's healthcare workforce.

Hospital and healthcare system leaders will also urge members of the Illinois General Assembly to oppose mandatory, one-size-fits all nurse staffing ratios in Illinois. Healthcare leaders say mandatory staffing ratios are an excessive overreach that will create real barriers to care for hospitals and health systems working to best serve their patients and communities. Staffing ratios take hospital staffing decisions out of the hands of local clinicians and nurses and impose inflexible staffing mandates on hospitals, which can be counterproductive to effective patient care. Hospitals must retain the flexibility and decision-making authority to appropriately deploy their resources and workforce to meet the unique, dynamic and diverse needs of their patients and their local communities.

Hospital Advocacy Day is an opportunity for hospital and health system leaders from communities throughout the state to meet face-to-face with legislators and share first-hand how legislation will impact their organizations and the patients they serve.

Statewide, hospitals and health systems are major job creators and economic engines in their communities, generating more than 490,000 direct and indirect jobs with an economic impact of more than \$108 billion a year.

About IHA

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association, with offices in Chicago, Naperville, Springfield, and Washington, D.C., advocates for Illinois' more than 200 hospitals and nearly 40 health systems as they serve their patients and communities. IHA members provide a broad range of services—not just within their walls, but across the continuum of healthcare and in their communities. Reflecting the diversity of the state, IHA members consist of nonprofit, investor-owned and public hospitals in the following categories: community, safety net, rural, critical access, specialty, and teaching hospitals, including academic medical centers. For more information, see www.team-iha.org. Like IHA on [Facebook](#). Follow IHA on [Twitter](#).

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