

CHA Media Statement

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Ongoing Protests of Emergency Regulations to Ensure Patient Safety Distract from the Mission at Hand: Care for All During the COVID-19 Crisis

“Following a protest Friday at Emanate Health in Covina that accuses hospitals of attempting to undermine California’s nurse-staffing ratio laws, it’s imperative that, for the second time this week, the record be corrected,” said Carmela Coyle, President & CEO of the California Hospital Association. “Again, our state is in the middle of an unprecedented crisis that has claimed the lives of more 22,000 Californians, more than 8,600 of those in Los Angeles County alone.”

“Nurses, doctors, hospitals, and state officials are focused on one thing: doing our best to save lives and care for every Californian in need,” Coyle said. “That is why protests, like the one at Emanate Health, must end, so we can come together to meet the needs of a tsunami of patients.”

Here are the facts:

- Emanate Health, like every hospital and health system in California, is deeply committed to keeping their staff and patients safe, and is following California Department of Public Health guidelines to do so.
- Hospitals throughout the state, including Emanate Health, have taken many proactive measures to mitigate the surge in COVID-19 patients, including hiring additional staff in appropriate areas, bringing on more traveler nurses, and providing enhanced training to current staff in areas designated to treat COVID-19 patients.
- 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-19 care, illness, retirement, family needs, and more.
- The current crisis is **three times larger** than COVID-19’s earlier surge this past summer. In Los Angeles County, 89% of adult ICU beds are full, 56% of those with COVID-19 patients. COVID-19 positive cases have increased 37% in LA County over the past two weeks, to more than 571,000.
- The state has granted a **temporary variance** from nurse staffing ratios that applies **only to the units in which COVID-19 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.

“We urge all in health care to focus on patients, as this surge is far from over, and Californians will be relying on them for weeks and months to come,” Coyle said.

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