

# CHA Key Messages

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## Hospitals Need Flexibility to Care for All During COVID-19 Pandemic

- **The demands of COVID-19 have strained California’s health care workforce, and hospitals remain committed to caring for all Californians, in all ways.**
  - Surges of COVID-19 patients can be intense, sudden, and unpredictable — and that has stretched the supply of health care workers to its limit.
  - COVID-19 patients require additional care and time, with a higher proportion ending up in the ICU, further straining the critical care workforce.
  - Staff are exhausted and often responsible for children in their households. Many are on leaves of absence.
  - Community spread also affects health care workers, who may be exposed to COVID-19 in non-work settings and need to self-isolate.
  - Nationwide staff shortages mean that everyone who needs health care workers are tapping into the same nursing registries, making it impossible to meet California’s staffing needs.
- **A waiver of the state’s nurse-staffing ratio requirement is an important tool that provide relief to a strained workforce and meet patient care needs.**
  - As the surge of COVID-19 patients continues in record numbers, it is essential that hospitals have the tools they need to care for their communities.
  - The waiver allows hospitals to move staff where they’re most needed at any given moment.
  - It places the hour-by-hour staffing decisions that must be made during a major public health emergency in the hands of on-site clinical professionals who are operating in unprecedented conditions.
  - A waiver can allow specialized staff to care for patients in the right setting. For instance, relief of ratios in lower acuity units can assist with staffing needs in higher acuity areas.
- **Given the trajectory of COVID-19-positive cases, it is time to return to the statewide waiver that was available to all hospitals through June.**
  - The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has [authorized](#) hospitals experiencing a COVID-19-related patient surge or staff shortage to request a staffing waiver.
  - CDPH previously issued an automatic waiver of the ratio for all hospitals from March 20 through June 30. The summer’s statewide COVID-19 surge is even worse than in the spring.
  - In the absence of a statewide waiver, all hospitals that apply for such waiver should be granted one by CDPH.