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HPAE Statement on the proposed state budget

In the middle of a staggering economic crisis brought on by a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, HPAE understands acutely the challenges New Jersey faces in setting funding priorities for the coming year. The dysfunction in Washington does not help matters. However, our state legislators need to carefully weigh some of the proposals contained in the administration's budget to determine whether they are fair, equitable and appropriate at this time in history.

Across the state all hospitals are already experiencing severe cuts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This makes the proposed health care cuts in this budget particularly shocking. We know a second surge of COVID-19 is bound to arrive at some point this fall. As Governor Murphy said in his recent budget address, "This pandemic isn't done with us yet. Not by a long shot. We are still at war." Health care funding, including charity care, should be a priority at this juncture.

One hospital, though, probably stands to lose more than any other. University Hospital, was in the epicenter of the COVID-19 crisis, caring for patients and leading regional efforts in North Jersey. U.H. serves a disproportionately large number of uninsured and under-insured people of color. Yet now New Jersey's only public hospital and the only safety net hospital in the state, will lose funding that will have a long term and devastating impact on these low-income communities of color in Newark. Cutting funding at this time continues a trend of disinvestment in this historic and critically important hospital that is serving some of our most vulnerable communities. University Hospital needs adequate funding so it can continue to successfully fight this pandemic war.

Debbie White, RN
HPAE President

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HPAE is the largest union of registered nurses and healthcare professionals in New Jersey representing 14,000 nurses, social workers, therapists, technicians, medical researchers, and other healthcare professionals in hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, blood banks, and university research facilities. HPAE is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.