



**New York City Council Hearing**

**Oversight:**

**State of Nursing in NYC – Staffing and Retention**

**Committee on Hospitals**

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**Chief Nurse Executive**

**NYC Health + Hospitals**

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Good afternoon Chairwoman Narcisse and members of the Committee on Hospitals. I am Dr. Natalia Cineas, Chief Nurse Executive and Co-Chair of the Equity and Access Council at New York City Health and Hospitals (Health + Hospitals). Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the state of nursing at Health + Hospitals. While Health + Hospitals is only one component of a much larger health care delivery system and workforce landscape in our City, we are proud of what we do. Our team of about 8,000 nurses is at the core of our mission to provide care to all New Yorkers. Our nurses are on the front lines of our hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes, delivering high-quality and compassionate care to our patients.

Currently, there is a nationwide and industry-wide shortage of nurses, from which H+H is no exception. While we have had staffing challenges like most other health systems across the country, we continue to provide uninterrupted care, and have taken steps to retain our current nurses and fill vacancies. We are engaged in a variety of efforts to provide incentives for currently employed nurses to remain in our system, which include converting temporary positions to permanent positions, partnering with CUNY to offer over 50 nursing advanced credit-bearing certificate and degree programs to current nursing staff, and loan forgiveness. We have also established several professional development opportunities for nurses, including a Preceptor Program, Clinical Ladder Program, Nurse Residency Program, and Nurse Recognition programs. In particular, our Nurse Residency program enables student nurses to transition confidently to become licensed professional nurses through group seminars on topics like decision-making, conflict resolution, end-of-life care, health care quality, patient safety, and more. In addition, participants receive support, build relationships with nursing peers, and develop leadership skills. As a result, nurse retention has more than doubled for new nurses in the Nurse Residency

program over the last three years. These retention incentives also play a crucial role in our recruitment efforts.

Health + Hospitals recruits nurses to fill vacancies through traditional means, innovative strategies and working with partner institutions. Our traditional methods include conducting monthly hiring fairs and posting advertisements on job listing sites like Indeed, LinkedIn, and others, while making it as convenient as possible for candidates to interview and onboard with us by offering virtual and on-the-spot interviews, as well as on-the-spot onboarding. Our innovative strategies include our Nurses4NYC campaign, which has a dedicated webpage and social media presence to fill nursing positions in high need areas. The campaign disseminates mini-documentary videos featuring individual nurses from different facilities and specialty areas. We are excited about our partnership with CUNY to expand career pathways for graduating nurses to enter our System, which is proud to be the largest employer of CUNY nurses in the city. Our enhanced partnership builds upon existing initiatives, like having over 1,000 CUNY nursing students support COVID-19 vaccination efforts in spring 2021.

Recognizing the toll that the pandemic has taken on nurses and other frontline healthcare workers, Health + Hospitals has taken proactive steps to promote wellness among our nursing staff. In particular, our nurse development programs, including the Nurse Residency Program, provide nurses with support and mentorship. In addition, we have worked to implement staffing models to reduce our nurses' workload. Nurses can also take advantage of our Helping Healers Heal, or H3 program, which focuses not only on addressing the emotional and psychological needs of our nurses in response to adverse events but also on proactively establishing relationships and spaces to promote overall wellness and resiliency. H3 offers an anonymous internal support hotline where staff can receive

psychological and emotional counseling from licensed clinicians, as well as individual and group settings where staff can receive support. We are proud of our wellness rooms, which provide a calming space for staff to decompress in many of our facilities, and are grateful for the public and private support that has enabled us to upgrade them.

NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County and NYC Health and Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health were recently recognized for their commitment to creating a healthy work environment for their nurses through the prestigious Pathway to Excellence designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). NYC Health and Hospitals/Kings County and NYC Health and Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health are the first and second hospitals in Brooklyn to receive the designation and are two of only three facilities in New York City with the credential. The Pathway to Excellence designation requires a rigorous process to evaluate progress in six standards: shared decision-making, leadership, safety, quality, well-being, and professional development. We appreciate this recognition, and are committed to ensuring that our nurses feel empowered and valued in the workplace.

It is the mission of Health + Hospitals to deliver high quality health services with compassion, dignity, and respect to all, without exception. We are immensely grateful for and proud of the work that our nurses do every day to advance our mission, and are likewise committed to supporting them day in and day out. Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to testify and for your continued support of Health + Hospitals. I look forward to our continued partnership and am happy to answer any questions you may have.