

**TESTIMONY OF
KATHLEEN SILARD
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Good afternoon. Stamford Health appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the continuation of emergency declarations and limited executive orders.

Stamford Health is a comprehensive, independent non-profit health care system that serves a region of approximately 650,000 people. We employ more than 3,700 people, making us the largest employer in the city of Stamford and one of the largest in Fairfield County. Beyond the lifesaving care we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we contribute more than \$1 billion to our state and local economy and provide more than \$90 million in uncompensated care to the residents that need it most. We are committed to providing friendly, personal care coupled with the most sophisticated services to all residents of lower Fairfield County.

Over the course of the pandemic, Stamford Health has cared for 2,282 COVID-19 patients. In addition to caring for admitted COVID-19 patients, we have administered over 255,000 COVID-19 tests and vaccinated over 92,300 individuals. We continue to care for other patients as well. We deliver babies, provide critical cancer, heart and stroke care as well as preventive screenings to avoid future health problems.

To manage the pandemic and assess COVID-19's trends including the highly beneficial impact of vaccines, our executive team regularly review data showing the, so-far, four distinct waves of community cases, admissions, discharges and deaths since the winter of 2020. As we saw each new wave rise, we pivoted to flex our staff, beds and ICUs to handle the influx of COVID-19 patients and then resume more normal operations after the wave. This is a significant undertaking and, when large parts of the country are also surging, securing staff and equipment to flex up becomes challenging.

Stamford Health greatly appreciates the partnership provided by the Administration and the General Assembly throughout the pandemic. The regulatory flexibilities have been critical to our ability to meet our patients' needs. We are hopeful that there are no future waves, but we have learned this virus is hard to predict. Until

there is greater certainty, we recommend that the legislature and the Administration continue to provide the flexibility that has been afforded hospitals.

We support the continuation of two, important regulatory flexibilities in particular. First, out-of-state practitioners who are appropriately licensed in a different state have been able to practice in Connecticut pursuant to a number of DPH orders. Especially considering current healthcare workforce shortages, this tool is very helpful. We would recommend this provision be codified to be extended at least through the summer. Our physician community has been concerned because this flexibility has often not been extended until close to its expiration meaning scheduled visits with out-of-state practitioners face a cliff after which their treatment will not be legally authorized. This, in turn, can lead to cancelations or needed appointments not being made.

Second, the expedited and streamlined certificate of need process related to adding ICU or other beds has worked very well. We recommend continuing this efficient process.

I am available to answer any questions you may have and appreciate your consideration of Stamford Health's views.