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West Virginia Hospital Association Releases 2024 Health Care Workforce Report

Charleston, W.Va. – The West Virginia Hospital Association (WVHA) has released its 2024 Health Care Workforce Report, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the current hospital workforce landscape in the Mountain State. The report highlights both progress and persistent challenges as hospitals strive to recruit and retain the skilled professionals necessary to deliver high-quality care.

With more than 54,000 caregivers employed by West Virginia hospitals, health care remains the state's largest employment sector. New data from the Kaiser Family Foundation confirms that West Virginia employs the highest percentage of individuals in health care compared to its total workforce nationwide.

"Our workforce is the backbone of our hospitals, said Jim Kaufman, President and CEO of WVHA. "This Report gives us the data we need to innovate and invest strategically in the people who care for our communities every day. The findings demonstrate progress while highlighting opportunities for further improvement."

Kaufman noted, while findings show progress, hospital staffing shortages are still having a measurable impact on patient access overall. Despite having 6,441 licensed acute care beds, hospitals can only maintain staffing for approximately 4,800 beds, creating access delays statewide.

Key Findings from the Report:

- **Workforce Shortages Persist:**
 - Converging factors like national college enrollment declines, increased caregiver burnout and an aging workforce continue to exacerbate staffing shortages.

- **Nursing Pressures and Progress:**

- Turnover among Nursing Assistants dropped from 42.9% in 2022 to 21% in 2024, a 51% improvement.
- Bedside registered nurse turnover declined by 54% over the same period.
- However, vacancy rates remain high for roles like Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) at 20.9%.

- **Imaging and Laboratory Gaps:**

- Radiologic technologist vacancies stand at 19.0%, and radiation therapist vacancies at 17.8%.
- Medical lab professionals are essential for diagnostic decisions, with lab technician turnover down to 7.4% and medical laboratory scientist turnover at 5.6%.

- **Respiratory Therapy Needs:**

- Vital in managing conditions like COPD, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, and in emergency care, respiratory therapists had a 15.1% vacancy rate in 2024—yet the lowest turnover rate among surveyed roles, at 5.9%.

Kaufman said, “the WVHA applauds the West Virginia Legislature and Governor Patrick Morrisey for continuing to prioritize health care workforce and care delivery in their policymaking decisions.”

This includes Governor Morrisey’s priority passage of SB 458 during the legislative session which allows universal licensing reciprocity in West Virginia, and former Governor Jim Justice’s \$20 million reinvestment in the Nursing Workforce Expansion Initiative, supplementing the original \$48 million commitment. Kaufman added, “both efforts represent critical steps toward addressing health care workforce challenges in the State.”

With 76.5% of West Virginia hospitals participating in the 2024 survey, WVHA now has actionable data to guide future policy, education, and funding decisions aimed at sustaining and strengthening the health care workforce.

“Addressing workforce challenges demands innovation and collaboration across local, state, and federal levels,” Kaufman said. “We are grateful for the partnerships that continue to make real progress possible.”

About WVHA

The West Virginia Hospital Association is a not-for-profit statewide organization representing hospitals and health systems across the continuum of care. WVHA advocates for policies that support the delivery of quality health care in West Virginia.

To view the full 2024 Health Care Workforce Report, visit: www.wvha.org

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