

Joint Statement from St. Luke's Health, Houston Methodist, Memorial Hermann Health System & Texas Children's Hospital Regarding Houston Hospital Capacity and Executive Order

HOUSTON (June 25, 2020)

CEOs across the Texas Medical Center have monitored the ongoing transmission of COVID-19 in our community and across the state since the earliest days of this pandemic. In response to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, we want to reassure the public that this pandemic is not eclipsing our capabilities. Our hospitals have the ICU capacity, staff and supplies to meet the healthcare needs of our community. In addition, Texas hospitals continue to reserve 15 percent of capacity for COVID-19 patients and medical care continues to be routinely provided in inpatient and outpatient settings without taxing the overall hospitalization capacity.

We realize that the letter issued by the Texas Medical Center yesterday afternoon caused unnecessary alarm. Our intent was to educate Houstonians and not alarm them about capacity, which is not an immediate concern.

This morning, the governor issued an executive order restricting elective surgeries across several Texas counties, including Harris County. We respect what the governor is doing to fight this terrible virus and we will continue to work with him and local officials to care for our community.

It is our hope that the executive order will only be in place for a short period of time, as it is critically important that we continue to meet the health needs of our community.

Each hospital system has prepared for months to address the anticipated needs of this pandemic and has surge plans in place to successfully manage its own capacity to continue treating COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients. Additionally, our hospitals are working together to manage capacity levels and ensure the highest quality care for all who need it. We will continue to work closely with state leadership and public health experts to help maintain statewide visibility on acute capacity issues and other critical concerns.

While this pandemic is unprecedented, our hospital systems have learned a lot, very quickly, and our coordinated efforts have allowed us to nimbly respond to this fluid situation. As leaders, we can attest to the heft, might, devotion and compassion of our workforce in caring for those with COVID-19 and those who arrive at our doors seeking care for other urgent medical needs. We are ready to serve the community and will do so in the safest way and environment possible. Through enhanced testing efforts, strict screening procedures and dedicated units to separate potentially infectious patients from the general population, hospital care is safe, ready and available for those who need it.

As we continue to navigate this pandemic, the public plays an essential role in helping preserve hospital capacity. It is critical to wear a mask or face covering anytime you leave your home, practice appropriate social distancing by avoiding large crowds and gatherings, wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, and avoid touching your face.

Responding to emergencies with precision is a hallmark of Texas hospitals. Our mission and responsibility is to provide the care our community needs. We must maintain a thoughtful balance between caring for those impacted by COVID-19 and addressing all other healthcare needs of our community, including critical surgeries and procedures. We stand ready and committed to providing you and your family with the health care you need.