

April 23, 2020**Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations**Office:** (716) 706-2061 | **Cell:** (716) 228-4886 | **Email:** jcav@chsbuffalo.org

Catholic Health to Furlough Associates Beginning April 26

As Catholic Health continues to care for the majority of COVID-19 patients in Western New York, one of the unintended consequences of the pandemic is the detrimental effect it is having on non-COVID related services at its hospitals and health centers, resulting in multimillion dollar losses each week the crisis continues.

Faced with the continued suspension of elective surgeries and drop in volume by as much as 50% in its ERs, primary care centers, and other specialty clinics, the health system announced last week that its leadership team would be taking temporary salary reductions. Yet, despite its strong balance sheet, Catholic Health President & CEO Mark Sullivan said the salary cuts alone would likely not be enough as area health providers continue to grapple with uncertainty in the marketplace.

“Because we will not be able to resume full services at all our facilities for some time, we have made the extremely difficult decision to furlough associates throughout our system,” Sullivan said today.

“The steps we are taking are based on the needs of our system at this time and do not reflect our associates’ work performance, or the value we place on the care or services they provide. As always, high quality care and patient, resident, and associate safety remain our top priorities.”

The system-wide furloughs include up to 1,200 management and non-management in this first phase. The furloughs will not affect patient care or any COVID-19 related services. “In times of crisis, we must make hard decisions to face the challenges before us, ensure we are able to meet the needs of our community, and provide for and protect our associates for the long-term,” he added. “The hopeful news is, that in addition to discharging nearly 240 COVID-19 patients since this crisis began, we are building a strong recovery plan for the future.”

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Sullivan supports the prudent approach Governor Cuomo is taking to resume elective surgeries in communities across New York that have fewer COVID-19 patients. For Catholic Health, that means phasing in elective surgeries at Mount St. Mary's Hospital in Niagara County and working closely with Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul on a recovery plan for its remaining Erie County hospitals, which include Mercy Hospital of Buffalo, Kenmore Mercy Hospital, and Sisters of Charity Hospital and its St. Joseph Campus, which is now the system's dedicated COVID-19 Treatment Facility.

"We have a measured, comprehensive plan to restore services across Catholic Health, while continuing to provide excellent care to our COVID-19 patients" Sullivan continued. "As we work toward emerging from this crisis, I want to thank our entire healthcare team for the sacrifices they are making to ensure we remain true to our mission and continue to provide the highest quality care to all."

Catholic Health worked closely with its union partners to develop a furlough plan for its unionized workforce. "We're grateful to our union leadership for their support throughout this crisis," said Sullivan.

The furloughs, which will be reevaluated in 30 days, are set to begin on April 26 as temporary unpaid leaves. All furloughed associates will continue to receive their current benefits. Those on furlough are also eligible to apply for New York State unemployment benefits, as well as additional benefits through the Federal CARES Act, which provides \$600 per week for eligible employees affected by the nationwide economic downturn.

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