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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gary J. Fitzgerald, President and CEO of Iroquois Healthcare Alliance, urges action to bolster Health Care Workforce in Upstate New York

ALBANY, NY —Today, Iroquois Healthcare Alliance (IHA) President and CEO, Gary J. Fitzgerald, delivered testimony about the workforce and fiscal challenges facing Upstate New York Hospitals.

“Upstate Hospitals’ Fiscal and Workforce issues are slow to improve. The outlook remains bleak. The dual challenges of fiscal sustainability and workforce stability persist among Upstate and Rural hospitals,” said Gary J. Fitzgerald, President and CEO, Iroquois Healthcare Alliance. “IHA urges support for initiatives to improve Upstate healthcare long into the future. However, the problem is compounding and immediate action is needed. It is imperative that immediate steps be taken to release funds already appropriated, and ensure that funds flowing through insurance companies are processed quickly as delays serve no public purpose and jeopardize access to care.”

“The data, along with experiences of both hospitals and patients, consistently underscores the enduring staffing crisis in Upstate New York hospitals. We have heard the rhetoric that there is no staffing shortage,” continued Fitzgerald. “This is plainly false, especially in Upstate New York where 20% of all RN positions are currently vacant, a 164% increase since 2018”

In addition, the data continues to show the financial health of Upstate New York hospitals remains unstable. They are in critical financial distress and are striving to sustain essential services. To illustrate, 64% of IHA hospitals have negative total operating margins even with supportive funding from state and federal sources. Half of these hospitals are operating with margins ranging from -2% to -6% and the remaining 50% are operating with margins below -7%. This is a crisis that is profoundly affecting healthcare access for communities throughout Upstate New York.

Policy makers must act to ensure consistent, long-term, and reliable funding as well as enact policies to ensure a robust healthcare workforce in Upstate New York. This is crucial to safeguard the well-being of Upstate communities. The untenable alternative is the loss of hospital services.

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About the [Iroquois Healthcare Association](#): IHA is a regional healthcare trade organization representing 54 hospitals and health systems, spanning over 28,000 square miles, across 32 counties of Upstate New York. IHA is the leading resource for facilities and professionals bringing quality health care to the region. IHA represents the unique needs of rural, small community safety-net providers to large, academic medical centers in Upstate New York’s urban areas through advocacy, education and information, cost-savings initiatives and innovative business solutions.