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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

When I became the new NDHA President two years ago, I never would have guessed the major challenge our hospitals would soon face. It seems like everything else pales in comparison to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, the virus continues to escalate. But hospitals have stepped up, scrambling to create isolation units, set up drive-through testing, add beds, and provide care in the face of an unknown, deadly virus. In doing so, hospitals have incurred significant costs. At the same time, revenues plummeted. Patients began to put off care and non-essential surgeries were postponed. Clinic encounters, emergency room visits, outpatient surgeries, and medical procedures all declined significantly.

To help hospitals through this unprecedented time, NDHA is assisting its members in several ways.

NDHA commissioned Eide Bailly to study the economic impact of the pandemic on hospitals. According to the study, North Dakota hospitals are projecting total lost revenue and increased incremental expenses of \$480 million for 2020. Hospital lost revenues exceeded 20% during the first three months of the pandemic. While federal funds have helped offset these losses, they are projected to fall significantly short, especially if economic losses increase in late 2020 or persist beyond 2020.

The study will be a critical tool in helping us tell our story during the next legislative session, which starts on January 5, 2021. While we don't know how the session is going to be structured in this new era of social distancing, we do have a clear vision of our platform: continuation of current Medicaid Expansion rates, fair Medicaid reimbursement, expanding workforce, and adequate behavioral health resources. Our message is clear: we are in the middle of a storm right now and we need stability in the healthcare system.

The North Dakota Hospital Foundation (NDHF) will also distribute \$1.3 million to member hospitals from grant funds awarded by the HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to support the urgent preparedness needs of hospitals to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. NDHF distributed the first round of funding last May and a second round will be distributed before the end of the year.

Lastly, to help members cope with the economic impact of the pandemic, NDHA is providing a one-time dues discount. All current hospital members will automatically receive a two percent reduction of 2021 dues.

NDHA will continue to explore additional ways to support you during these unprecedented times. We are listening and eager to help you in achieving your mission to improve the health of North Dakota communities.

Tim Blasl

*We value your membership!*