Talking Points: Hospitals and Health Systems – COVID-19 Response

- As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves, hospitals and health systems know our patients and communities are increasingly concerned whether and how the virus is spreading in communities.

- That’s why we are working closely with our federal, state and local partners to respond to this challenge, update contingency plans and stay informed with the most up-to-date information.

- In particular, hospitals and health systems are focused on identifying, isolating and informing on new cases of patients known or suspected of having the virus.
  1. We are updating our electronic health records to identify patients who meet the most recent CDC criteria that might mean they have COVID-19;
  2. We are isolating those who may have the virus in special rooms where they are assessed by trained personnel; and
  3. We are making sure to inform local public health officials when a possible COVID-19 patient presents to a hospital so that these patients can quickly be tested for the virus and public health officials can start to identify other potentially affected individuals who have been in close contact.

- It is important to know that all hospitals and health systems regularly prepare for the unexpected and are required to conduct regular preparedness drills. We are always training our staff on how to protect themselves as they care for patients.

- Just in the last decade, outbreaks like swine flu, Ebola and Zika have strengthened our readiness and emergency preparedness, and have taught us important lessons on how to respond to infectious disease outbreaks.

- We are also closely following CDC recommendations on how to best use and preserve existing supplies of personal protective equipment due to concerns about limited supplies.

- We are paying close attention to the protection of our health care workers on the front lines. They are the most valuable resource when it comes to treating and stopping the spread of the virus. As such, we want to make sure they have the personal protective equipment, training and support they need to provide care to patients.

- In an effort to increase our capacity to respond, the American Hospital Association, in partnership with the American Nurses Association, recently asked Congress to swiftly provide $1 billion in initial supplemental emergency funding to support the urgent preparedness and response needs of hospitals, health systems, physicians and nurses on the front lines of this outbreak.

- It is important to remember that hospitals and health systems frequently confront disease outbreaks, adapting quickly to serve their communities.