

As chief medical and nursing officers of major health systems in Michigan, it is with a sense of urgency, compassion and responsibility that we appeal to the citizens of our state. Michigan appears to be heading into a fourth COVID-19 surge with rising cases across our communities and hospitals. Unlike previous surges, we finally have free, widely available, highly effective and safe vaccines available to protect you and your family. Throughout this pandemic, no other medicine or intervention has been nearly as effective in preventing serious illness and death as the COVID-19 vaccines. More than 370 million doses have been administered in the United States with remarkable safety. **In fact, the FDA issued full approval of the Pfizer vaccine Aug. 23, reaffirming its effectiveness and safety after reviewing tens of thousands of pages of safety and effectiveness information.**

Our healthcare workers who have been on the front lines of this pandemic for 18 months are disheartened and frustrated to see so many unvaccinated individuals admitted to our hospitals and dying from serious complications of COVID-19 infection. **Nationally, approximately 99% of individuals dying from COVID-19 are unvaccinated.** This is a preventable tragedy. We are concerned about the health and safety of our vulnerable populations including the elderly, those with co-existing medical conditions, our children who are not yet vaccinated and the frontline healthcare workers. In fact, it is most alarming that pediatric hospitalizations are on the rise due to the complications of COVID-19 infection. As kids return to school, the most important thing parents can do is get them vaccinated as soon as they're eligible and urge everyone in your family to mask up in public.

Although there is conflicting information on the strength, duration, and effectiveness of natural immunity from previously having COVID-19, there is robust evidence to show that the vaccine is safe and highly effective even if you have been previously infected and may provide additional immunity. Also, as unvaccinated individuals acquire COVID-19, they may not be aware of the danger of developing long lasting complications of COVID-19, the risks they place on health systems currently stretched to capacity, and the fact that more infections leads to more – and more dangerous – variants.

We are seeing our emergency rooms and hospital beds and intensive care units fill up again with this fourth surge of COVID-19, with more than 1,000 individuals now hospitalized with a preventable virus. This increased volume comes at a time that health systems are experiencing the worst healthcare worker shortages in history. Unfortunately, as the situation worsens, this hinders our ability to care for other patients who are experiencing serious illnesses such as stroke, heart attacks, diabetic complications, obstructive lung disease and trauma regardless of their vaccination status. Our frontline clinical colleagues find it exhausting and disheartening to see more and more patients unnecessarily ill, suffering and dying, despite their long hours at their bedsides and remarkable dedication.

Together, healthcare workers and our citizens have the ability – and a responsibility – to stop this global pandemic. We plead with those of you who remain unvaccinated to get vaccinated now. The vaccine *is* safe and effective. You trust us when you're sick, when you have an

emergency or when you have a chronic health need. Please trust us now when we guide you to get this vaccine.

Signed:

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