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## **A Message from the President & CEO Mark Parkinson**

### **Statement Regarding COVID-19 Vaccinations of LTC Staff**

The COVID-19 vaccines have offered hope in a time when it is desperately needed. We are going through one of the hardest physical, emotional, and financially challenging years ever in our profession. And now we have the answer we had been waiting for – an effective and safe vaccine that has dramatically reduced COVID-19 cases and the severity of illness in long term care.

However, with the vaccines came another question: what can we do to educate and encourage long term care staff and residents to get vaccinated? The Association developed the [#GetVaccinated](#) campaign to educate about the vaccines and provide essential resources for members. We worked closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on this effort, hosted frequent tele-townhalls to address specific concerns, and developed a multitude of resources for providers to educate staff. And while all of these efforts have resulted in a steady increase in vaccination rates, more needs to be done.

We're at a point where mandating the vaccine is becoming a larger part of the conversation. You have likely seen it all over the news where various organizations, including many health care settings, are taking this step. This comes as no surprise, given the highly contagious Delta variant. Unvaccinated individuals remain at high-risk and can spread the virus to others, including vaccinated individuals. Our residents are some of the most vulnerable individuals to the consequences of contracting COVID-19.

The AHCA Board and NCAL Board, under the leadership of chairs Debbie Meade and Helen Crunk, have come together to agree upon and issue a [public position](#) on this critical issue. Key points include:

- To protect all residents, staff, and others in our communities from the known and substantial risks of COVID-19, AHCA/NCAL strongly urges the vaccination of all health care personnel. COVID-19 vaccines protect health care personnel when working both in health care facilities and in the community. They provide strong protection against workers unintentionally carrying the disease to work and spreading it to patients and peers.
- AHCA/NCAL also supports all providers who adopt mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policies for health care personnel, with state and local regulations and circumstances shaping whether and how these policies are implemented.

The boards have had many conversations to get to this point. Everyone recognizes the significant workforce challenges you all face. We must ensure that we have enough caregivers to support our residents. Therefore, we call on state and federal policymakers to enact solutions to help address these workforce challenges.

You, your staff, and your residents have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic. You've worked hard to make sure those who need it get the highest quality care throughout the ups and downs this past year and a half. The only way we can end it is to get vaccinated, and I believe we can get there. Thanks for everything you have done and continue to do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Parkinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "P".

**Mark Parkinson**

President & CEO, AHCA/NCAL