



August 10, 2021

The Honorable Mayor Jane Hughson
630 E Hopkins
San Marcos, Tx 78666

Dear Mayor Jane Hughson,

Thank you for your continued leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Your guidance and support are instrumental in our community's continued efforts to fight the coronavirus. As COVID-19 cases again rise, providing quality care remains at the heart of CHRISTUS' mission to extend the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, and we remain committed to preventing and treating COVID-19 in our community.

Unfortunately, the increase in positive COVID-19 cases has also resulted in increased hospitalizations. Our hospital is currently treating 35 COVID-19 patients and lack much needed staff despite our nurses and physicians carrying more than three times the standard caseload. Unless our community can quickly mitigate the spread of COVID-19, our hospital could soon lack the capacity to meet the needs of our patients.

In addition to capacity and staffing concerns, we are now faced with overwhelming financial concerns. Our labor costs are escalating at a rapid pace, especially in our inpatient nursing units and emergency departments, with vacancy rates often ranging from 20-40%. We are projecting to spend an excess of \$600,000 per month in premium labor alone and as contract rates continue to increase, this spend could approach \$1 million in the coming months if patient load remains at current or increasing levels. In order to recruit in this highly competitive environment, we have quadrupled sign on bonuses to existing Associates in areas of critical shortage in an effort to stabilize the workforce. Again, this considerably increases our labor costs on top of the premium pay plans.

During the previous peaks of COVID-19 in our community, the state of Texas provided nurses, staff and resources to help combat the virus. At this point, however, it is our understanding that the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) is advising local governments to use Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CLFRF) to help with current staffing expenses at hospitals. Because it is imperative that we immediately meet the needs of our sickest patients, and continue to staff appropriately despite unprecedented salary costs, we ask for your help in providing the financial resources necessary to obtain nurses to staff our COVID beds.

Our courageous frontline Associates desperately need the additional help to care for our community's patients during this challenging time, and we hope you will assist our efforts as we ensure they get the help they need.

CHRISTUS is honored with the responsibility of caring for our community, and we appreciate any financial support you can provide as we again treat patients and try to stop the spread of this terrible virus. I am happy to discuss our hospital's specific needs in greater detail at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact me at thomas.mckinney@christushealth.org, 512-753-3500 (office) or 903-280-2201 (cell).

Again, I appreciate your continued leadership and friendship and I know that working together, we can make our community healthier by ending COVID-19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Thomas McKinney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Thomas McKinney, FACHE