



New
Hampshire
Hospital
Association

**Annual Report
2022**

Letter to Members

Dear Colleagues:

As 2022 draws to a close, we want to thank you for the tremendous leadership you have shown through your individual organizations and collectively through the New Hampshire Hospital Association this past year. Hospitals in the Granite State stood together as we cared for patients in a once in a century, global pandemic and ensured that the blue and white H was there when our communities needed us more than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a defining moment for all of us, and hospitals in New Hampshire delivered in more ways than one. We did so not because of what we were able to do individually, but what we were able to do together. The incredible engagement of you and your senior teams has been the hallmark of our success together. And, as the theme of this year's Annual Meeting suggested, it will be the hallmark of our success moving forward because we are *Stronger Together*.

But the headwinds facing hospitals and the health care system are strong...from the workforce and financial sustainability challenges to an ongoing behavioral health crisis and the myriad of payor challenges associated with commercial payors, Medicare Advantage plans and others. The pandemic has laid bare the fragility of our health care system and placed an even greater set of burdens and expectations on what has always been the backbone of health care in New Hampshire—the hospitals and health systems that serve patients and communities all across the state. Our collective voice will be essential to addressing and resolving these issues.

While we continue to focus on managing capacity across the health care system, we are also starting to turn our attention to new and different challenges and opportunities. As all of us seek to innovate and serve our patients and communities in new ways, the New Hampshire Hospital Association is your partner in those efforts, and we appreciate your active involvement with us as we strive to serve you in pursuit of your missions.

Thank you again for your membership and partnership with one another through the New Hampshire Hospital Association. We look forward to an exciting year ahead as we seek to make progress on the issues that matter most to you, your organizations and the patients and communities you serve.

Sincerely,



Dean Carucci
Chair, NHHA Board of Trustees



Steve Ahnen
President, NHHA

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Chair

Dean Carucci, CEO

Portsmouth Regional Hospital

Vice Chair & AHA RPB Delegate

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Elliot Health System

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Dartmouth Health

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Waybird Consulting

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Weeks Medical Center

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Exeter Health Resources

Robert Nutter, President

Littleton Regional Healthcare

Michael Peterson, FACHE, President & CEO

Androscoggin Valley Hospital

John Prochilo, FACHE, Chief Executive Officer

Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital

Jeremy Roberge, CPA, President & CEO

Huggins Hospital

Alex Walker, President & CEO

Catholic Medical Center

Our Vision

A healthy New Hampshire where all communities and individuals are able to reach their highest potential for health.

Our Mission

To lead through advocacy, education, and information in support of its member hospitals and health systems as they strive to improve the health of the patients and communities they serve.

Academic Medical Center

4. Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center

Large Community Hospitals

1. Catholic Medical Center
2. Cheshire Medical Center
3. Concord Hospital
5. Elliot Hospital
6. Exeter Hospital
7. Frisbie Memorial Hospital
8. Concord Hospital - Laconia
9. Parkland Medical Center
10. Portsmouth Regional Hospital
11. Southern New Hampshire Medical Center
12. St. Joseph Hospital
13. Wentworth-Douglass Hospital

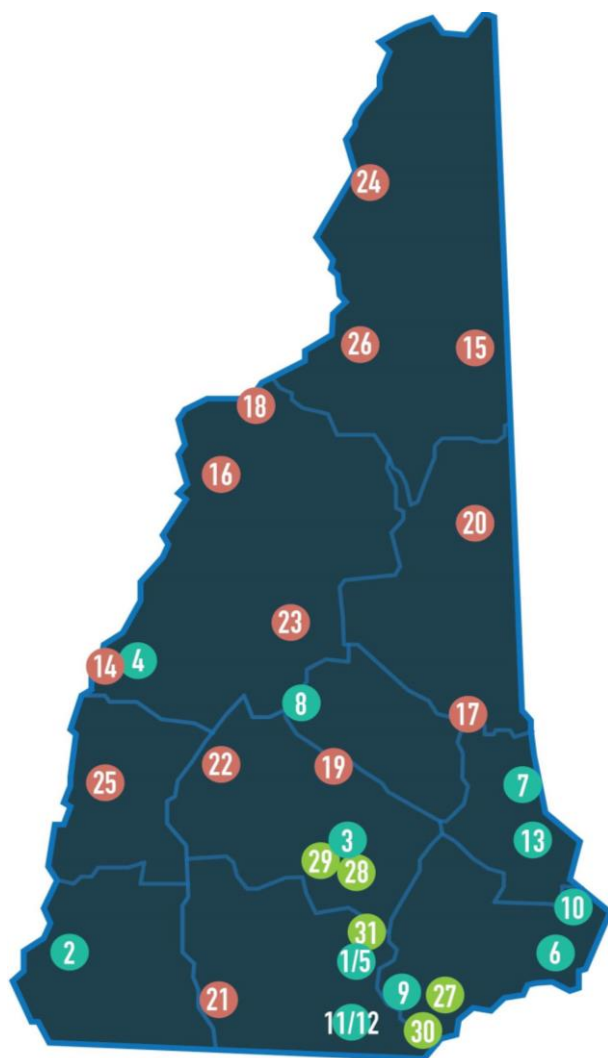
Critical Access Hospitals

14. Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital
15. Androscoggin Valley Hospital
16. Cottage Hospital
17. Huggins Hospital
18. Littleton Regional Hospital
19. Concord Hospital - Franklin
20. Memorial Hospital
21. Monadnock Community Hospital
22. New London Hospital
23. Speare Memorial Hospital
24. Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital
25. Valley Regional Hospital
26. Weeks Medical Center

Specialty Hospitals

27. Hampstead Hospital
28. Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Concord
29. New Hampshire Hospital
30. Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital
31. VA Medical Center

Member Snapshot



Since 1934, the New Hampshire Hospital Association has remained committed to advancing its advocacy priorities on behalf of its member hospitals and health systems, and this past year reflects the achievements made together. That work could not be more important given today's increasing challenges, and our collective efforts are leading the way to a healthier New Hampshire.

Leadership for a Healthy New Hampshire

We've all witnessed the increasing political polarization across the country over the past several years, but that polarization came home to Concord, New Hampshire during the 2022 legislative session in ways we've never seen before. When the legislative session began in January, there were over 50 bills introduced in the House and Senate that would have made the job of health care leaders and front-line staff much more difficult. From bills that prohibit employers, including hospitals, from requiring their staff be vaccinated against COVID-19 to permitting pharmacists to dispense Ivermectin, an unproven treatment for COVID-19 and potentially dangerous drug for some without physician oversight or review, the challenges ahead were steep.

Facing an uphill battle against a very loud minority of public voices, the NHHA formed a multi-disciplinary stakeholder group, the **Healthy 603 Coalition**, made up of hospitals, businesses, doctors, nurses, other providers, education, arts and advocacy organizations to combat those bills and present evidence-based responses to all of the misinformation legislators were hearing. The leadership of the Association and the **Healthy 603 Coalition** was a major reason why the vast majority of those bills were defeated, and several others were successfully amended.

*The success of the **Healthy 603 Coalition** was an unprecedented level of collaboration that focused on vaccine-related bills, including state and federal vaccine mandate bills, the state's immunization registry, hospital visitation policies, and patient and employer protections.*

Together, we ensured a healthier, safer New Hampshire.



Still #GraniteStrong

Over the course of the last year, hospitals dealt with the impact of COVID-19 spurred on by the Delta and Omicron surges while being confronted with ongoing workforce challenges. During this difficult time, NHA used the #GraniteStrong hashtag to reinforce the strength and resiliency of the incredible caregivers, staff, trustees and communities who are New Hampshire's hospitals and health systems.

As we head into the winter months ahead, New Hampshire is yet again facing the threat of an overwhelming number of patients needing care and not just for COVID-19, but flu, RSV, other respiratory viruses, as well as the health needs put off during the pandemic which now may require hospital level care. Our hospitals' health care heroes are exhausted, yet they continue to do everything they can to serve their patients and communities who depend on them.

We continue to be so proud of our **#GraniteStrong** health care heroes who have collaborated and partnered with one another across the state to ensure patients can get the care they need, when and where they need it, which is more vital now than ever.

'The COVID-19 pandemic is the worst public health crisis we have ever faced, but through an unprecedented collaborative effort between the Association, hospitals and health systems, and public health officials, our collective response has been stronger than ever on behalf of patients and communities statewide.'

*Christopher Fore, MD, Chief Quality Officer
Concord Hospital*

Strengthening the Behavioral Health System

In New Hampshire, as it is in the rest of the country, behavioral health services have long suffered from a lack of investment and resources, and unfortunately, the stigma that patients and families experience only further limits access to care.

Significant challenges in accessing behavioral health services results in patients unable to access care in the community and ending up in crisis. They often find themselves waiting days, weeks and sometimes longer in hospital emergency departments until they can get the specialized health care that they need in the appropriate setting. Steps are being taken to address gaps in the behavioral health care system, but there continues to be inadequate capacity across the entire spectrum, including acute inpatient behavioral health care beds.

The Association, alongside our members, remains actively engaged in both federal and state litigation to ensure that patients who are deemed to be a danger to him/herself or others and are the subject of an involuntary emergency admission petition can get the timely treatment and due process they need and are entitled to under law.

2022

Average Number
of BH Patients Held
in Emergency
Departments
per day
1/1 – 12/12

66

Source: *Juvara* as
reported by NH
hospitals

We remain committed to assisting our members to meet the growing demand of mental health patients seeking care and removing barriers to care our patients face.

Protecting New Hampshire's Health Care Workforce

During the last three years, we have seen an unprecedented increase in both incidences and severity of workplace violence. To help support and protect our health care workforce, NHHA successfully advocated for legislation that establishes the **Workplace Violence Prevention Program** and the **New Hampshire Health Care Workplace Safety Commission**, both of which aim to enhance workplace violence prevention through data collection, risk assessments, sharing of best practices and annual reporting. This important legislation will be implemented in 2023 to ensure health care facilities have the resources and support they need to protect the health and safety of their health care workers.

In addition, NHHA continues to partner with the American Hospital Association on the **Hospitals Against Violence** campaign, which highlights tools and resources available to hospitals on building workplace violence prevention programs, creating safer work environments, mitigating violence in the workplace, and public health approaches to ensure safer environments for employees and patients.

As the largest NH medical center, we have experienced a significant increase in both the number and severity of workplace violence episodes. We're grateful that we were successful in getting the Workplace Violence Prevention Program and the New Hampshire Health Care Workplace Safety Commission established through legislation which will enhance workplace violence prevention efforts.'

Susan Reeves, EdD, RN, CEP, Senior Nurse Executive, Dartmouth Health

Bolstering New Hampshire's Health Care Workforce

One of, if not the most, significant challenge facing the entire health care system is the burgeoning workforce crisis. Workforce issues that existed before the pandemic have only been exacerbated since 2020 and there is no question that we are losing staff more quickly than we are able to replace them. Hospitals are not alone in the struggle to hire staff as workforce shortages are even more apparent in other areas of the health care system, such as behavioral health, post-acute and long-term care. These staff shortages result in hospitalized patients who are ready for discharge staying longer than they need in an inpatient setting because there are no available beds in lower-acuity settings, adding to the backlog and patient flow challenges for hospitals.

NHHA is engaged in a variety of initiatives aimed at bolstering New Hampshire's health care workforce by focusing on recruitment, retention and sustainability strategies in support of our member hospitals and health systems. We remain committed to supporting the health care workforce today while building a pathway for the future.

Forward Fund

NHHA and the Foundation for Healthy Communities (FHC) are actively engaged with the Endowment for Health's Forward Fund and it's **Giving Care: A Strategic Plan to Expand and Support New Hampshire's Health Care Workforce** which aims to expand and better support the state's health care workforce. The strategic plan outlines policy, regulatory and educational barriers that limit recruitment and retention; stress, mental health and barriers to care made worse by the pandemic; reimbursement issues; and siloed workforce development efforts. Implementation of goals and priorities is ongoing.

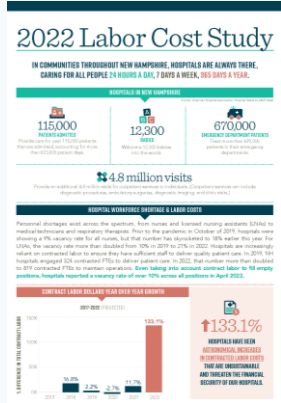
Peer Support

In collaboration with the New Hampshire Professionals Health Program and the NH Department of Health & Human Services, FHC & NHHA launched a new **Clinical Peer Supports Learning Community** aimed at supporting our health care workforce through adverse events, the COVID-19 pandemic, workplace safety and violence events, and other incidents that may trigger stressors for health care workers. A forum for hospital leaders to share success and challenges, as well as an educational and support community for those actually providing the clinical peer support.

Labor Cost

Hospitals and health systems across the nation are experiencing exorbitant costs in their efforts to address the critical workforce challenges they face.

This has been especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic as hospitals and health systems have provided essential services and saved lives, while also facing unprecedented financial and operational challenges. NHHA released a **2022 Labor Cost Study Report** that highlights the challenges and financial impacts that New Hampshire **hospitals are facing in addressing the workforce shortages through unsustainable contract labor rates, which increased 133.1% from 2021 to 2022**. The health care workforce is the backbone of delivering essential patient care, and this can only be possible through a robust, healthy workforce. NHHA will continue to support workforce sustainability and growth, reimbursement rates, and federal and state regulatory policy that foster innovative and long-term solutions.



Advocacy & Policy Highlights

Legislative and regulatory work is central to our advocacy on behalf of our hospital members, and this past year was one of the most challenging legislative sessions ever experienced in Concord. Engagement with our members, partners and other stakeholders, particularly through the Healthy 603 Coalition made a huge impact on our successes on several of our priority areas:

- ✓ Almost 50 COVID-19 related pieces of legislation, from prohibiting vaccine mandates, to allowing ivermectin to be available via a standing order and prohibitions on COVID-19 mitigation measures like masks, were either defeated or modified.
- ✓ The healthcare workplace safety commission, along with data collection requirements passed. Another component of that bill that did not pass, warrantless arrests, will be our focus in 2023.
- ✓ An increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates for New Hampshire birthing centers became a reality as of July 1, 2022.
- ✓ Simplification of the criminal history background check process for certain health care workers, by allowing for third party companies to help facilitate the reporting, can now be utilized by hospitals and health care providers.
- ✓ Emergency and temporary health care licenses have now been streamlined into the licensure process managed by the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification (OPLC) under a bill that codified these license types.
- ✓ A legislative study committee and a future study commission evaluating the work of OPLC will examine the opportunities for creating more efficiencies in professional licensure processes, and better delineate the roles and responsibilities between OPLC and the individual licensing boards will ultimately have an impact on health care workforce development, recruitment, and retention.

Federal Highlights

At the federal level, NHHA met several times with our congressional delegation members to convey the ongoing challenges facing hospitals as they strive to serve their patients and communities. Congress' past efforts to secure regulatory flexibility, financial relief, and additional support have been instrumental in the ability of hospitals and other health care providers to withstand the greatest public health crisis in over a century. However, further efforts are needed, including better oversight of Medicare Advantage plans, reauthorizing or making permanent the Medicare Dependent Hospital designation, establishing a temporary per diem payment targeted to hospitals to address patients that have barriers to discharge, making permanent the expansion of telehealth services, among many other important policy and program priorities.

'This past legislative session presented a number of challenges that would have significantly impacted hospitals across the state, but together the members and the Association stood strong with a unified voice that was extremely powerful and effective in our mutual interest to provide the best possible care to our respective communities.'

Michael Peterson, FACHE, President & CEO, Androscoggin Valley Hospital

Additional Highlights

NHHA Launches New Website

This past year provided us the opportunity to modernize our digital and social platforms so that we could enhance communication with member hospitals and health systems, state and federal policy makers, partners, colleagues and the general public. Our new website, nhha.org, provides a much more comprehensive understanding of our advocacy priorities while creating a more engaging medium for telling the stories of New Hampshire hospitals and the impact they have as economic engines, community anchors and places of health, healing and hope.



There were
231 patients
in NH during the 2-
month period who were
medically cleared for
discharge but unable to
do so, resulting in
MILLIONS
in lost revenue.

Barriers to Care in New Hampshire

The Foundation for Healthy Communities released a statewide **Barriers to Care Report** highlighting the barriers to receiving the appropriate care or transition of care for patients. This report identified **231 patients** from August 1 – September 30, 2022, who were medically cleared for discharge but were unable to do so due to a guardianship or Medicaid related barrier, representing a total of **15,799 additional, unnecessary patient days** while no longer needing services.

** 23 hospitals reporting*

Bringing Value through Business Solutions

Through its **Endorsed Business Partner (EBP)** program, the NHHA delivers greater value to its membership by connecting hospitals and health systems with carefully selected business partners who provide value-added services at reduced costs. These endorsed partners address members' needs through innovative business solutions, while providing critical support to the Association in the form of non-dues revenue.

NHHA Endorsed Business Partners



Collaborating with hospitals since 1934, the New Hampshire Hospital Association provides leadership through advocacy, education and information in support of its member hospitals and health care delivery systems in delivering high quality health care to the patients and communities they serve.



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