



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STEWARD HEALTH CARE'S SYSTEM-WIDE APPROACH TO COVID-19 INCLUDES ENHANCED REMOTE TESTING CENTERS, REINFORCED COMMUNITY HOSPITAL SERVICES, AND NATION'S FIRST "DEDICATED CARE CENTER" TO ONLY TREAT COVID-19 PATIENTS**

Steward Health Care has taken a very systematic, proactive and comprehensive approach to balance the need of accommodating a rise in COVID-19 patients, while maintaining the level and quality of care for all our patients and the communities we serve.

Our response strategy to COVID-19 has included three distinct stages.

First, our preparations began months ago, when the virus initially emerged in the United States. Steward launched a substantial program to acquire and stockpile specialty equipment required to treat COVID-19 patients - including ventilators and personal protective equipment. Many of those resources have been strategically distributed to our hospitals already. A significant amount of our resources remains centralized, ready to be deployed or redeployed across our different regions if and when they are needed. While we have only treated 10 confirmed COVID-19 inpatients across our more than 7,000 beds nationwide to date, we are prepared for an influx.

Second, because we understand that hospitals need to continue to care for sick patients who don't have COVID-19 – and to keep our emergency rooms as free from COVID-19 as possible, we have instituted remote testing facilities, including “drive through” testing centers, so that suspected patients do not have to go into a hospital setting for testing and risk infecting other patients. Steward has launched 3 drive-through testing centers in Utah, and other remote testing sites will be activated this week in Massachusetts and Florida. At our “drive-through” locations, patients referred by their doctors will be able to remain in their cars to be swabbed and screened for the virus. Utilizing remote testing sites allows local emergency rooms to maintain capacity to treat all other patients in emergent situations.

Third, in areas where the patient impact has become more endemic, such as Eastern Massachusetts, we are proactively preparing to handle any influx in COVID-19 patients. Steward is announcing the establishment of designated hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients -- the first being Carney Hospital in Boston.

Beginning on Tuesday, March 17, Steward Health Care's Northeast division will begin to transform Carney Hospital into the nation's first “Dedicated Care Center” for treating patients who test positive for COVID-19. Carney Hospital's conversion will include the creation of negative pressure patient wards, enhanced patient isolation protocols, and the marshaling of specialty equipment needed to treat critical COVID-19 cases - including an increased supply of ventilators and personal protective equipment.



While federal and local governments introduce their own efforts to confront this pandemic, Steward Health Care -- which operates 35 hospitals in nine states and serves more than six million patients annually -- is preparing to operationalize a similar model for “Designated Care Centers” in other Steward communities on an as-needed basis, customized to meet the needs of our different regions.

This unprecedented action serves two important purposes. First, by locating COVID-19 patients in a focused environment, Steward can better dedicate the necessary resources, equipment and expertise to provide COVID-19 patients focused care and the very best opportunity for a full recovery. Secondly, this measure keeps Steward’s Emergency Rooms and other hospitals in Massachusetts fully operational, allowing us to continue caring for other patients who are sick, who are mid-course in treatments, who are in chronic pain and who need high-quality care. This approach also ensures that non-COVID-19 patients continue to receive necessary treatment of acute conditions.

To this end, Steward will continue our scheduled treatments and procedures, at the discretion of surgeons and physicians in consultation with their patients. During this pandemic, Steward remains committed -- and able -- to meet the essential, ongoing health care needs of its patients. It would be irresponsible to ignore the fact that many other patients will continue to experience heart attacks and strokes, be diagnosed with cancers or blood clots, require joint replacements, endoscopies to diagnose cancer, and cardiac catheterizations, among a host of other life altering maladies. Our responsibility is to determine how to most effectively care for COVID-19 patients while continuing to provide exceptional care to our communities and keep patients healthy and well.

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### **About Steward Health Care System**

Steward Health Care is the largest private, tax-paying physician-led health care network in the United States. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, Steward operates 35 hospitals in the United States and the country of Malta that regularly receive top awards for quality and safety. The company employs approximately 42,000 health care professionals. The Steward network includes multiple urgent care centers and skilled nursing facilities, substantial behavioral health services, over 7,900 beds under management, and approximately 2.2 million full risk covered lives through the company's managed care and health insurance services.

The Steward Health Care Network includes 5,000 physicians across 800 communities who help to provide more than 12 million patient encounters per year. Steward Medical Group, the company's employed physician group, provides more than six million patient encounters per year. The Steward Hospital Group operates hospitals in Malta and nine states across the U.S., including Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah.