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*For News Release: May 19, 2021*

## **Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame Salutes Alabama Healthcare Workers**

The Alabama Department of Public Health reports that over 18,000 healthcare workers have contracted COVID 19 serving the people of our state. We do not know how many of these individuals have died from the disease as a result of their service. The aftermath of the COVID 19 epidemic on Alabama's health care workers will probably impact an entire generation of Alabama's medical professionals.

The Alabama Health Care Hall of Fame is the only independent Alabama organization that exists to recognize and salute all of our state's healthcare workers who demonstrate outstanding devotion, leadership, expertise, and courage in the healthcare service of Alabama's citizens. This year, we were overwhelmed by worthy candidates. The recipients should include workers from doctors, nurses, and respiratory therapists who have saved lives on a daily basis, to environmental services staff who cleaned the contaminated ICU rooms and kept everyone safe. Healthcare workers in hospitals, nursing homes, doctor's offices, and emergency services have risked their lives for us. Their families have borne the same uncertainty as service members' families whose loved ones are deployed in combat zones. These workers have carried the pain and suffering associated with COVID deaths for the rest of Alabama's society. Like our military, these fellow Alabamians have answered the call without hesitation. While focused on saving lives and protecting coworkers, they have also worried about bringing this deadly disease home to family or neighbors. This double burden has placed extraordinary mental and physical health strains on these skilled professionals. Every Alabama healthcare worker is a precious, scarce resource for our state. Alabamians cannot afford to lose any of these workers, and we cannot thank them enough for their service.

As taught in America's military, these dedicated individuals have "held the line" when confronted by overwhelming adversity, suffering, and risk of death caused by the pandemic. Our state should acknowledge this sacrifice and extend all possible support to these individuals, from the ICU teams to the custodial staff. Alabama's public and medical leadership should embrace the same central concept of our nation's armed forces: "No man left behind." We should honor and support these medical veterans of the war on this pandemic as we have shown devotion to our military veterans both on and off the battlefield.

The Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame recognizes all of our devoted healthcare workers who sacrificed and kept us safe, especially those individuals who, as President Lincoln described, "have given their last full measure of devotion" to fulfill their duty to their patients and our communities. We grieve for their loss and express our thanks to their families for their service to our state.

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