Joint Statement Urging Virginians to get Influenza Vaccinations to Protect Themselves when Flu Season Arrives as the COVID-19 Pandemic Remains a Public Health Threat

Endorsed by AARP Virginia, the American Academy of Pediatrics – Virginia Chapter, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – Virginia Section, APIC Virginia, Augusta Health, Ballad Health, Bon Secours, Carilion Clinic, Celebrate Healthcare, Centra Health, Chamber RVA, Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters, Chesapeake Regional Healthcare, Clinch Valley Health, Fauquier Health, the Hampton Roads Chamber, HCA Virginia Health System, Health Quality Innovators, Inova, LeadingAge Virginia, Lyft, Mary Washington Healthcare, MEDARVA Healthcare, the Medical Society of Virginia, the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Novant Health UVA Health System, the Prince William Chamber of Commerce, Quality Insights, the Richmond Ambulance Authority, Riverside Health System, the Roanoke Regional Chamber, Sentara Healthcare, Sovah Health, Twin County Regional Healthcare, UVA Health, Valley Health System, VCU Health, the Virginia Academy of Family Physicians, the Virginia Alliance of YMCAs, the Virginia Assisted Living Association, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia Association of Free and Charitable Clinics, the Virginia Association of School Nurses, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians, the Virginia Community Healthcare Association, the Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Department of Health (and the Virginia Board of Health), the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Education Association, the Virginia Health Care Association-Virginia Center for Assisted Living, the Virginia Health Care Foundation, Virginia Health Catalyst, Virginia Hospital Center, the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association, the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Nurses Association, the Virginia Organization of Nurse Executives & Leaders, the Virginia Pharmacists Association, the Virginia Rural Health Association, and Wythe County Community Hospital

As Virginia prepares for the coming flu season, hospitals and health care providers and organizations representing state and local government, businesses, educators, and many other stakeholders and communities of interest in the Commonwealth have joined together to issue this statement to promote the importance of getting a flu shot – now, more than ever, during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

To support this effort, Lyft, the ride-sharing company, is offering ride credits for people traveling to get a flu shot. Virginians can use the code **VAFIGHTSFLU** for rides to and from vaccination sites. Ride credits will be available until Dec. 31, 2020 and additional terms may apply.

"Millions of Americans get the flu each year. It is estimated that at least 39 million people became ill with the flu during the 2019-2020 flu season (early October through early April), leading to a minimum of 18 million

medical visits, 410,000 hospitalizations, and at least 24,000 deaths. In addition to the human cost, the economic impact of the flu related to lost work time, productivity, and medical resource investment amounts to billions of dollars annually."

"This year, it is more important than ever to get vaccinated considering the continued presence of the COVID-19 viral global pandemic that has already claimed more than 198,000 American lives. While data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that the share of Americans getting flu vaccines has risen in recent years, many people still do not get vaccinated. During the 2018-19 flu season, CDC data shows just 45.3 percent of U.S. adults (ages 18 and older) and 62.6 percent of children (ages 6 months to 17 years) received the vaccine. The Commonwealth outperformed the national average for adults (50.6 percent) and children (69.6 percent) during the 2018-2019 flu season."

"Everyone in Virginia should receive an annual flu vaccine. This includes people in heavily populated cities and counties and people who live in rural towns and hamlets. It includes healthy and vulnerable Virginians, younger and older people, and those in communities of color. Getting a flu shot is especially important for people in communities with health outcome disparities that have also been hard hit by COVID-19 – data indicates that Black, Latinx, and Asian adults have lower average flu vaccination rates than white adults."

"As in-person and virtual school years resume and flu season approaches, now is the time to get a flu vaccine. Doing so is an important precaution that provides a measure of relief to those who are vaccinated – it is one less thing to worry about during the time of COVID-19. In addition to flu shots, it is also vital for parents to get their children caught up on any vaccinations they may have missed during the temporary stay-at-home order earlier this year, and for all Virginians to begin to ready themselves to get a COVID-19 vaccine when that becomes publicly available."

"Just as social distancing, wearing masks in public, and frequent hand washing continue to be necessary behaviors to practice for the good of public health, getting a flu shot is important to reduce strain on the economy and the health care delivery system during the continued fight against COVID-19."

"The flu shot is low or no cost for many Virginians with commercial insurance. All Virginia Medicaid members have access to no-cost flu shots this year during the health emergency. Free clinics also offer no-cost flu shots to uninsured patients based on availability. So please, get a flu shot, and encourage your friends, family, and neighbors to do the same."

VIRGINIA HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION

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Virginia College of Emergency Physicians

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RAA
Richmond Ambulance Authority

Quality Insights
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Virginia Health Catalyst
The Intersection of Overall
Health and Oral Health

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CENTRA

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UVA Health

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