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September 16, 2021

Bryce Ward, Mayor
Fairbanks North Star Borough
907 Terminal Street
P.O. Box 71267
Fairbanks, AK 99701

RE: \$4 Million ARPA Funding Request

Dear Mayor Ward,

Foundation Health Partners appreciates your support and recognition of this historical healthcare crisis facing our community. Our healthcare system is faced with meeting the needs of our residents while caring for the historically high number of critically ill COVID patients during this surge of COVID 19.

We are requesting \$4 million to be able to increase wages by \$2 - \$3 per hour for critically essential eligible entry level positions. That equates to being able to increase wages for over 750 Foundation Health employees. Our objective is to use the ARPA Premium Pay funds to retain and attract personnel in critical areas where we are having difficulty staffing these important positions.

We have more than 200 open positions within Foundation Health Partners, more than half of those are entry-level positions. These are important support positions and include environmental service workers, certified nursing assistants, nutrition service workers, registrations representatives, medical billers, clinic techs, and phlebotomists. These are positions we typically fill from our local community-based talent pool and are the backbone to the care provided by our clinical staff.

We have seen a 40% drop in our normal applicant traffic for these positions in the last year. We are experiencing high turnover in these positions as competition for local talent has increased across the community. We've implemented a \$1000 retention bonus for current and new hires in these roles. We are struggling to offer critical-shift incentives in several areas to ensure we have staff to cover the shifts.

Working in healthcare is very meaningful and rewarding, but in a pandemic, it is extremely daunting. Our employees are weary and exhausted. (Studies show that the pandemic is driving people to leave the health care field. CNBC, The Washington Post, Forbes, CIDRAP)

Our entry-level workforce will benefit personally. Our clinical staff will benefit by the reinforcement and services provided by these employees. And our system of care for our community will benefit by a stabilized workforce.

Thank you for your support of this request as we continue to navigate through the COVID surge and dedication to our FHP Mission: *People First. Community Focused. Excellence Every Time.*

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Shelley D. Ebenal, CEO
Foundation Health Partners



Jeff Cook, Board Chair
Foundation Health Partners

cc: FNSB Assembly
Chief of Staff, Jim Williams