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**F**irst and foremost I thank our dedicated nurses at Washington Hospital who have shown fortitude and resilience in the face of COVID-19 — a time that will forever change health care. The World Health Organization could not have been timelier in designating 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse on this 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. Florence would be proud of our nurses, as I am.

Even before anyone heard of COVID-19 last year, we were on the path with our new CEO, Kimberly Hartz, to strengthen collaborative relationships between nurses, doctors, support staff and Hospital administration; and further define our culture of safety. Kimberly and I implemented a regimen of weekly rounds in all units. This face-to-face open exchange of ideas, updates, concerns and challenges is proving invaluable during the pandemic.

On August 3, we applied for recertification of our prestigious Magnet® status, the international gold standard in nursing and a distinction we have maintained since 2011. As you can read in the stories following this letter, Washington Hospital nurses are the embodiment of Magnet recognition on every front. More than 80 percent of our direct care nurses have achieved a Bachelor of Science in nursing as well as myriad specialty certifications, far exceeding national benchmarks. In addition to their education, they are skilled, talented, innovative and compassionate.

Our nurses' ingenuity has shone through while they have adapted to constant changes brought on by COVID-19. We are proud of our family-centered focus, although incorporating family members into the care team has proven more challenging when they are not allowed on-site to visit their loved one and are only in touch by phone and video. And by our nature, nurses are close, not socially distant to those we care for. So we continue to find innovative ways to communicate with and compassionately care for patients through the layers of personal protective equipment.

In addition to our extraordinary nurses, I am grateful to the physicians and staff and our volunteers for their teamwork during this challenging time. I also thank the Hospital administration and our board of directors for their leadership as we navigate this evolving health care frontier.

Nurses are being called heroes now, and while the recognition is appreciated and deserved, I know they have always been heroes. Throughout our history and whatever the future brings, Washington Hospital nurses remain wholeheartedly committed to the Patient First Ethic at the bedside, on the frontlines and in the community.

*Stephanie Williams*