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**For Immediate Release:**

February 11, 2022

## **New York National Guard lends a helping hand at Catholic Health nursing homes**

Catholic Health's long-term care facilities will welcome some "extra forces" from at least a dozen members of the New York National Guard this week. Currently, this includes Father Baker Manor in Orchard Park, McAuley Residence in Tonawanda, and Mercy Nursing Facility at OLV in Lackawanna.

Following their general orientation to the facilities, the guard members will be joining the staff as non-clinical extenders, allowing the Catholic Health skilled nursing and subacute care facilities to expand their bandwidth.

The National Guard will help support Catholic Health's caregivers following the most recent COVID-19 surge from the Omicron variant. This is the first time the National Guard has been called in to help at any of the Catholic Health facilities since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

The ways the National Guard members will serve at the long-term care facilities include working in the housekeeping and dietary departments and serving in other ways behind the scenes.

"As non-clinical extenders, the National Guard Soldiers/Airmen will not be providing direct resident or patient care, but instead will be supporting associates so they can continue providing a high level of care to those who reside in our facilities," said Tom Gleason, senior vice president of Catholic Health's Home & Community-Based Care division.

New York State Governor Kathy Hochul announced in late January that non-medically trained members of the National Guard would be deployed to bolster staffing at nursing homes across the state that were impacted by staffing challenges. A surge of positive COVID-19 cases during the last several months left New York State healthcare systems dealing with a deluge of patients.

"We greatly appreciate the support being offered by Governor Hochul and her team, and the dedicated men and women from the New York National Guard who will provide their time to serve in our community," added Gleason. "We hope their presence will underscore the importance of getting vaccinated, and taking other actions like social distancing and masking to prevent the spread and further hospitalizations."