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Chairman of the Board of Trustees

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**Comments to the Honorable Colleen Burton, Chair, and members of the
House Health and Human Services Committee regarding PCB HHS 22-01—COVID-19 Liability
Protections Application Extension**

My name is Dominic M. Calabro and I am President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, taxpayer research institute & government watchdog which, for over 40 years, has worked hard to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of Florida government and promote a fair and equitable system of taxation.

Last session, Florida TaxWatch released an independent research report entitled [“The Best Defense Is A Good Offense: The Economic Impact of Protecting Responsible Floridians from COVID-Related Civil Liability.”](#) Our report highlighted the critical economic need for the protections. In short, if employers’ confidence in the economy was shaken due to the absence of a liability shield, Florida’s economy could have lost as much as \$27.6 billion and more than 356,000 jobs annually.

We commend the 2021 Legislature for its rapid response in enacting liability shield protections and commend your committee for realizing the need for these protections for health care providers is not over. **The current protections expire March 29, 2022, and an extension is critical.**

Responsible healthcare workers and facilities who are acting in good faith to comply with public health directives, and who must make extremely difficult decisions under trying and uncertain circumstances, must have comfort that they will be able to provide treatment and care without fear of opportunistic, predatory, and expensive litigation. It is just as important to make sure that those acting in “bad faith” are held accountable for their negligence while ensuring that those who contract COVID-19 because of the gross negligence of others can recover for their injuries. **We must ensure that good actors are protected and bad actors are punished.**

The pandemic is not over. The strain on Florida’s health care system has lessened but it is still significant. **The appearance of COVID-19 variants, further highlights the need for an extension.** The potential still exists for runaway litigation would have a devastating impact on Floridians across the board but especially our health care providers. **Safeguards are essential to ensure that healthcare providers that are working hard to comply with public health directives or protective measures are protected from civil liability.**

As I close let me thank you for recognizing the need for extending health care liability protections and addressing this issue early in the session. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this and other difficult issues related to the pandemic and economic recovery.