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FMA Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine

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Florida's receipt of 179,000 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine this week is cause for celebration, and as noted by Dr. Charles Lockwood, Senior Vice President, USF Health, Dean, USF College of Medicine, "is our magical Neil Armstrong moment."

The Florida Medical Association is grateful for the herculean work done by the scientists and researchers who developed a safe and effective vaccine in an incredibly short period of time, but is mindful that a full recovery from this horrible pandemic will only be possible if the public takes advantage of the gift that science has provided. With the Moderna vaccine's imminent approval and distribution next week, and with other vaccines likely available early next year, the FMA urges everyone who can safely receive a vaccine to do so at the appropriate time. For maximum effectiveness, the FMA strongly recommends each person that receives an initial vaccine to follow up and ensure they receive the second dose within 21-28 days.

At the same time, the FMA recognizes that there is a limited amount of the vaccine available for distribution in December, and urges patience as the state undertakes the unprecedented effort to implement a mass inoculation program. There are far more health care providers

and long-term care residents who qualify for the first round of the vaccine than there is vaccine available. Manufacturing, distribution and administration still pose challenges and will require an extraordinary level of cooperation in order to ensure that everyone who wants the vaccine receives the vaccine as soon as it becomes available. The FMA has been in contact with the Florida Department of Health and will continue to advocate that all physicians in the high risk/high contact category be provided appropriate access to the vaccine.

As we begin the process of administering the vaccine to millions of people in this state, the FMA is committed to work with the Department of Health to ensure that Florida's vaccination effort is conducted in a scientific, transparent and fair manner as directed by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

In the meantime, the FMA urges everyone to continue their efforts to combat the virus by wearing a mask, washing their hands and avoiding large crowds in closed settings.

