

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
CHARLES R. DREW PROFESSOR OF SURGERY

February 23, 2021

Dear Howard University Community,

Happy International Women's Day 2021. The ascent of Howard alumna Kamala Harris to the vice presidency of the United States is clearly a significant victory for the advancement of women in our society. But it is also representative of how female leadership has always guided and given momentum to our national progress. For her journey to the White House to have taken place at all is the result of so much hard work and dedication by generations of women who came before her.

The influence of women in positions of power has been abundantly clear throughout the pandemic. Across the country and from all strata of life, women on the frontlines have helped keep people safe and informed. Whether they are doctors or nurses; administrators, receptionists or technicians; at-home or nursing home caregivers, so many women have continued to go into work every day during the pandemic in order to serve their community. At a time when many people were hunkering down in their homes to keep themselves safe, these women were going into work, many taking public transportation in order to get there, to make sure that people suffering from COVID-19 were getting the care and treatment they needed. Of course, they thought about the risk they were taking on – but they simply did not let any fear they felt get in the way of the duty they needed to perform.

At Howard University Hospital, in particular, these women were primarily serving people in underserved communities. They worked hard to limit the devastation of a pandemic that was disproportionately affecting African-American men and women. Even as the death toll climbed higher and higher, they recognized the vital significance of working to save even one life.

But more important than the impact of their individual actions was their influence, the spread of their leadership. By going into work, they inspired others to do what they could to help people and fight the pandemic. By getting vaccinated, they helped inform people that the vaccine was safe and encourage others to get vaccinated so they could protect themselves, their families and those in their communities.

The pandemic did not turn these women into heroes – they have always been, and will always be, the heroes our communities need. Even when times return to normal and our situation as a



country stabilizes, may we continue to see these female frontline workers as the warriors and leaders they are.

Our society will be better if we recognize their contributions and foster an environment where female leaders can prosper.

Excellence in Truth and Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wayne A. I. Frederick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "F".

Wayne A. I. Frederick, M.D., MBA
Charles R. Drew Professor of Surgery
President