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HON. BRIAN BABIN
OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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It is an honor to stand here today to recognize a handful of remarkable individuals from my Congressional district for their exceptional contributions to the health and safety of communities across Southeast Texas since the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

I have seen people come together – like never before – to help and support each other throughout this unprecedented time. People from all walks of life, and from different backgrounds and ideologies, put their own needs aside to respond to the crisis at hand without hesitation.

Today, I wish to personally honor and say thank you to our frontline healthcare workers. You have selflessly put yourselves in the path of the virus in order to protect the rest of us, and you are true American heroes.

To the doctors, nurses, technicians, EMTs, pharmacists, home health aides, and everyone else who supports patient care – from the bottom of my heart – thank you. You have gone above and beyond. Your dedication, courage, and strength deserve our most profound admiration and gratitude. Your service to your community has impacted and saved countless lives.

It would take days for me to appropriately honor each and every person who deserves special recognition. Unfortunately, I have limited time today, so I want to highlight just a few of these heroes.

From my neck of the woods in Tyler County, I want to thank Carrie Holland Evans, a registered nurse who was infected with COVID-19 in the line of duty. Since her recovery, Carrie has participated in virology studies and has donated convalescent plasma to help save lives.

I want to recognize Dr. Qamar Arfeen, who delivers home health and hospice care across Southeast Texas and is the head of the COVID-19 unit at Baptist Hospital for all of his work on convalescent plasma.

From Houston Methodist in Baytown, I want to mention four brave and resilient registered nurses. Jennifer Vera, Laduska James, Dorothy Terry, and JonAnn Watson. Your contributions to the hospital and dedication to patient care were simply awe-inspiring.

Also, from Houston Methodist in Baytown, I want to thank Gina Cotter, who collaborated across disciplines to educate and upskill nurses to provide respiratory care while also serving as a frontline respiratory therapist.

From Houston Methodist in Clear Lake, I want to thank Dr. Omar Acres, Dr. Nina Zatikyan, and Dr. Arthur Lim, who all cared for many infected patients. I also want to recognize three registered nurses – Stephanie Dockter, Diana Freyberger, and Nicole Herrick, who all volunteered to care exclusively for COVID-19 patients so the other staff members would not have to.

I want to acknowledge the largest hospital system in Southeast Texas – Memorial Hermann Health System – which has been on the front lines of the region’s response to the pandemic. Memorial Hermann’s more than 6,000 physicians, 8,000 nurses, and hundreds of case managers and social workers have been caring for patients and their families in one of the country’s most significant hotspots. They risk their lives every day to care for our community and have worked tirelessly to slow the spread of this disease.

Finally, I want to mention a handful of heroes from CHI St. Luke’s.

Thank you to Dr. Lou Hamer, a pulmonologist who closed his outpatient practice and instead fully dedicated his services to supporting the needs of COVID patients.

Thank you, Dr. Monte Orahoad for working day and night since the pandemic started and for your clinical oversight which has undoubtedly resulted in successful patient outcomes.

Dr. George Rodriguez, thank you for providing clinical guidance and leadership on patient care and protocol development. And to Dr. Zaher Shebib, who has consulted on every single COVID-19 patient case for St. Luke’s.

Also from St. Luke’s, allow me to highlight Lab Director Charlie Combs, who is described by his colleagues as an unsung hero, as well as Chelsea Pavlowich, Christina Andrews, Sarah Hill, Candace Fernandez, Jason Case, Nidia Johnson, Cole Morse, Cassie Fire, and Lisa Agler who are all superhero nurses and whose commitment to patients supersedes any fear of this dangerous virus.

To the thousands of health care workers who due to time constraints were not mentioned tonight, please know this: YOU are the heroes of this unprecedented time. This country and your Congressman will forever be grateful.

May God bless each and every one of you, and may we see an end to this global pandemic very soon.

God bless you, thank you, and I yield back.



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress