Nemours Children's Health Announces Rachel Thornton, MD, Ph.D., as Vice President, Enterprise Chief Health Equity Officer

The new role will advance Nemours Children's health equity strategy and diversity, equity and inclusion

WILMINGTON, DEL. (February 16, 2022) – Rachel Thornton, MD, Ph.D., will join Nemours Children's Health, one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, as Vice President and Enterprise Chief Health Equity Officer on March 1. Dr. Thornton will lead the organization's work on an enterprise-wide health equity strategy and coordination in support of Nemours Children's vision to create the healthiest generations of children. In this new role, Dr. Thornton leads Nemours Office of Health Equity and Inclusion and is also responsible for supporting a richly diverse and inclusive environment for patients, families, associates, and the communities we serve.

Dr. Thornton serves as Chair of Membership, Diversity and Inclusion for the Academic Pediatric Association (APA) and has been instrumental in advancing APA's efforts to embody diversity, equity and inclusion. She has also been integral in developing a focus for the work of the APA Anti-Racism Task Force led by scholars and educators in academic pediatrics across the U.S.

Dr. Thornton served as Health Policy Advisor at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development from 2011-2013 where she applied research to inform policy locally, regionally, and nationally. Her research examines the impact of social context and non-health sector policies on child health, intergenerational cardiovascular disease risk, and health equity. As a nationally-recognized innovator in health equity research and practice, she served as a member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine study committee on *Shaping Summertime Experiences: Opportunities to Promote Healthy Development and Well-Being for Children and Youth* and as a member of the *Strategy Group on COVID and Rental Evictions*.

"Nemours Children's Health is committed to "well beyond medicine" which requires a focus on social determinants, health equity and the workforce needed to achieve this model of care," said Nemours Children's Health EVP, Chief Population Health Officer Kara Odom Walker, MD, MPH, MSHS. "Dr. Thornton is exactly the kind of nationally recognized leader who can set the course for Nemours Children's to be a model for child health equity, diversity and inclusion for the entire country."

Prior to joining Nemours Children's, Dr. Thornton was the Inaugural Executive Director for Clinical Services in the Johns Hopkins Medicine Office of Population Health where she led efforts to transform models of care to optimize population and community health. As an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and a practicing general pediatrician, she also served as Associate Director for Policy at the Hopkins Center for Health Equity where she led collaborations focused on advancing equity in community health and expanded the Center's research to include life-course and intergenerational approaches.

Nemours Children's Health is committed to anti-racism, striving to create an environment where all children, families, and associates, regardless of the color of their skin, know they are valued. Nemours Children's Diversity, anti-Racism, Inclusion, Value, and Health Equity (D.R.I.V.E.) initiative is a commitment to change in pursuit of an equitable and healthy future for all. Dr. Thornton will lead the continued momentum and progress of Nemours D.R.I.V.E. Task Force.

"Establishing this new position and hiring Dr. Thornton builds on D.R.I.V.E.'s successes and brings us closer to realizing our vision. We look forward to her leadership in furthering Nemours commitment to this important work." said Cindy Bo, MBA, Nemours Children's Health, Delaware Valley, SVP of Strategy and Business Development, and lead of the Enterprise D.R.I.V.E. (Diversity, Anti-Racism, Inclusion, Value, Equity) Strategy and Task Force.

"As healthcare organizations, we have a responsibility to deliver equitable healthcare to the patients we serve, and we have tremendous potential to act as a force-multiplier for health equity in the community. Truly moving the needle on outcomes requires a strong organizational commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as well," said Dr. Thornton. "I am excited and humbled to be joining an organization with such a strong vision and commitment. The Nemours Children's D.R.I.V.E. Task Force has made important strides. It serves as a springboard for the work ahead as we chart a path towards realizing equity in child health for our patients and creating a blueprint to improve outcomes for all."

Dr. Thornton is a clinically practicing board-certified pediatrician. She received a B.A. from New York University, an M.D. from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and a Ph.D. in Health Policy and Management from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. After residency, she completed fellowship training in general academic pediatrics.

About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing

children's hospitals and a network of nearly 75 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit Nemours.org.

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