



February XX, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the XX undersigned organizations representing the Nursing Community Coalition (NCC) we urge you to include the below priorities as you continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing impact it has on our communities and patients nationwide. The NCC is a cross section of education, practice, research, and regulation within the nursing profession representing Registered Nurses (RNs), Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs),¹ nurse leaders, students, faculty, and researchers who have been on the frontlines during this public health crisis. As we confront this pandemic and work to distribute and administer vaccines, we strongly request the following areas be included in the next COVID-19 relief package so our current and future nursing workforce may continue to respond to the public health challenge.

- **Protect and Support those on the Frontlines:** As we continue to address the safety and well-being of our frontline healthcare workforce, including nurses and APRNs, it is essential that we not only ensure an adequate supply of PPE, but that we also compensate and support essential workers for their services. We urge you to:
 - Provide resources to support our nurses, APRNs, and nursing students' mental health needs, especially for those responding to this pandemic;
 - Institute safety measures for the current and future nursing workforce;
 - Include funding to ensure childcare coverage is available for individuals that need it.
- **Support Nursing Education Infrastructure: Pass the Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN) Act (S.246/H.R.851):** As higher education institutions continue to combat the realities of COVID-19, nursing education remains a top priority. The FAAN

¹ APRNs include certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and nurse practitioners (NPs).

Act would support the needs of nursing students, help retain and hire diverse faculty, and provide resources to modernize nursing education infrastructure and create and expand clinical education opportunities. These efforts are essential and will help prepare nursing students as they transition from the classroom to the frontlines.

- **Include Nurses, APRNs, and Nursing Students in all National Public Health Plans:** Since 2008, the local public health departments alone have lost more than 55,000 public health jobs, which include nurses.² This drastic shortage of public health professionals has been brought into stark relief during the current crisis. As Congress continues work on a COVID-19 package, it is imperative that we not only provide an immediate injection of funding to bolster the public health nursing workforce, but long-term investments in a national public health service infrastructure, which must include nurses and other health care professionals.
- **Invest in Federal Programs that support Nursing Workforce and Nursing Research:** During these critical times, bold investments in longstanding and successful federal programs, such as Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), are essential. These programs have a proven track record, continue to help ensure the health and well being of all communities, and support nurse scientists who's research establishes the scientific basis for quality patient care. One way to continue support for existing federal programs is by including the bipartisan Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act (S.54), which provides additional resources for the Nurse Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment programs and other programs that support nurses and APRNs who work in areas that need them the most.
- **Promote Access to Telehealth:** Increased flexibility in telehealth access has been an essential component of providing care on the frontlines and will continue to be integral to clinicians after this public health emergency. We encourage any future legislation to include telehealth provisions that:
 - Address geographic limitations and remove originating site restrictions so that patients can receive telehealth in their homes;
 - Remove the limitation on the number of telehealth services Medicare providers can deliver;
 - Increase coverage and reimbursement for audio-only telehealth services; and
 - Expand telehealth to previously uncovered services and visits when the clinician determines that it is clinically appropriate;
 - Remove the recently passed provision requiring a prior in-person relationship between practitioner and patient before a Medicare patient can access mental health services via telehealth;
 - Continue to allow state licensing boards and practitioners to determine the appropriate standards of care for patients.

We urge Congress to include these shared priorities in COVID-19 relief efforts. Supporting nursing education, research, and the workforce is imperative to the health of our nation now and into the future. If the Nursing Community Coalition can be of any assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact the coalition's Executive Director, Rachel Stevenson, at rstevenson@thenursingcommunity.org or at 202-463-6930, ext. 271.

Sincerely,

² National Association of County & City Health Officials. "The Forces of Change in America's Local Public Health System: 2018. <http://nacchoprofilestudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018-Forces-ofChange-Main-Report.pdf>

CC:

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn

House Minority Whip Steve Scalise

Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin

Senate Minority Whip John Thune

Chairman Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee

Ranking Member Richard Burr, Senate HELP Committee

Chairman Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee

Vice Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee

Chairman Patty Murray, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Ranking Member Roy Blunt, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee

Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers, House Energy & Commerce Committee

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Committee

Ranking Member, Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Ranking Member, Tom Cole, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

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