

January 27, 2021

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

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), we thank the United States Congress for its ongoing efforts to provide resources and support as the nation continues to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously enacted COVID-19 response legislation has focused on the important tasks of revitalizing the economy and making important improvements to our nation's health care system. ANA urges you to continue this work and remain focused on implementing robust policies that assist our nation's frontline health care providers.

A year has passed since the first COVID-19 case was reported in the United States, and our nation's nurses continue to answer the call and serve tirelessly on the frontlines of the pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our nation's nurses experienced tremendous levels of stress in their day-to-day work, with challenges including exceedingly long hours and staffing shortages unfavorable to safe workplaces. Now, that stress has been exacerbated as nurses face the overwhelming strains of providing care.

Of the more than 12,000 nurses participating in a December 2020 survey conducted by the American Nurses Foundation, Pulse of the Nation's Nurses, most shared they are currently experiencing a higher likelihood of depression, anxiety, and distress from when they were surveyed in spring 2020. During the spring administration of the survey, 50 percent of nurses indicated they were overwhelmed. These feelings have intensified as nurses indicated in the recent survey that 72 percent of them felt exhausted. Congress must act to address the needs of frontline providers in order to ensure that we continue to have a workforce in the future.

As Congress begins work on its first COVID-19 response package in 2021, ANA urges you to consider the following policies to protect nurses and other health care professionals as they risk their own health and safety to save the lives of their fellow Americans:

- Establish mental and behavioral health resources for nurses and other health care professionals providing care across all health care settings;
- Pass the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* (H.R. 8094/S. 4349), bipartisan legislation introduced in the 116th Congress which would reduce the rates of suicide and address behavioral health conditions among health care professionals;
- Ensure that nurses do not have to use their paid time off because of suspected exposure or contraction of COVID-19;
- Provide hazard pay to nurses, and other frontline health care providers, to maintain a ready workforce in the face of the demands of responding to the pandemic; and
- Rebuild the public health infrastructure that was decimated by budget cuts after the 2008 financial crisis and has hindered our nation's ability to combat the current pandemic.

While these are the topline issues impacting our nation's nursing workforce, ANA remains committed to working on vaccine education and administration, ensuring access to safe and appropriate personal

protective equipment, shoring up our nation's public health infrastructure, ensuring we have the funding necessary to support a robust nursing workforce in the future, and protecting our nurses against workplace violence. We have attached a welcome letter that has been sent to each member of Congress that outlines these priorities in greater detail. We welcome the opportunity to work with each of you to address these vital issues.

I encourage you to pass bipartisan, comprehensive legislation that will provide robust protections and resources for our nation's frontline health care providers. ANA looks forward to opportunities to work together as we continue to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and stands ready to serve as a resource. Please contact Ingrida Lusic, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs at (301) 628-5081 or Ingrid.lusic@ana.org with any questions.

Sincerely,



Debbie Hatmaker, PhD, RN, FAAN
Chief Nursing Officer/EVP

cc: Ernest Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANA President
Loressa Cole, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, ANA Chief Executive Officer