

March 11, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Submitted Electronically: gary.beck@hhs.gov

Dear Vice President Pence,

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), I am writing in response to the work of the Administration and the Coronavirus Task Force. ANA supports the Administration's recognition that a coordinated response is needed to change the tide of this pandemic. We strongly encourage as the Administration works to control the spread of the COVID-19, that nurses be consulted in any policy, legislative, or regulatory action. As the largest healthcare provider group in the country, Registered Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are educated, trained, and are recognized as the most ethical and honest profession. Frontline nurses are the primary link between consumers and healthcare systems in preventing and treating those with COVID-19. ANA requests a meeting with the Coronavirus Task Force members to discuss how nurses can play a pivotal role in advising the Administration during this pandemic in recommending policies that will protect America's healthcare workforce while providing timely care to communities most affected.

ANA requests that the Administration focus on the following issues:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** The safety and health of our frontline clinicians is vital to keeping communities healthy. N95 masks are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to provide the minimum appropriate protections to healthcare workers including nurses. However, ANA acknowledges the challenges of ensuring an adequate supply chain of approved PPE for healthcare providers. The Administration under the new guidelines for respirators and masks during the pandemic must investigate and communicate on the transmission mode for COVID-19 so that decisions about appropriate PPE are based on the best information available. ANA encourages the Administration to coordinate the supply chain to provide the regions most affected with the resources they need while incentivizing increased supply to back fill PPE elsewhere, as well as identify the metrics for when the interim guidance will be rescinded to ensure that clinical providers and health care facilities can prepare to continue caring for their patients.
- **Ensure that nurse are at the table:** As the Task Force and Administration implements policies that protect the healthcare workforce, ANA encourages the Administration to work with nurses at facilities to protect staffing levels in order to prevent adverse outcomes caused by fatigue. If a facility becomes overwhelmed with patients, nurses need the appropriate support to provide quality care to every patient. Chief nursing officers are in the position to advocate for staff nurses.

- Flexible licensure and telehealth: ANA would also encourage the Administration to look at opportunities to allow flexible licensure rules, including through the use of telehealth technologies, during this pandemic to ensure that units are fully staffed and mandatory overtime is not used as a way to meet the needs of a facility. By removing barriers to provide telehealth in all communities during this pandemic, improved access to timely care can help reduce the spread of the virus to both compromised patients and the clinicians providing care in healthcare facilities.
- Expand paid sick leave: ANA supports expanding federal paid sick leave to all healthcare workers who are quarantined because of an exposure to COVID-19 or contract COVID-19 while working on the frontlines. Healthcare workers need to know that they are supported while putting their lives at risk while providing care to their communities.

ANA provides resources to our members and to the public on COVID-19 and offers to be a resource to the Administration during this pandemic. Federal, state, and local health leaders should work with ANA and their state nurses associations to plan and respond to this pandemic.

ANA is the premier organization representing the interests of the nation's 4 million RNs, through its state and constituent member associations, organizational affiliates, and individual members. ANA members also include the four APRN roles: NPs, clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs). ANA is dedicated to partnering with health care consumers and payers to improve practices, policies, outcomes, and access across the health care continuum.

We look forward to following up with appropriate Administration staff about these concerns and continue to offer ANA and nurse leaders as a resource during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have any questions, please contact Ingrida Lusis, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs, at 301-628-5051 or Ingrid.Lusis@ana.org.

Sincerely,



Loressa Cole, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Secretary Alex Azar
United States Department of Health and Human Services

Assistant Secretary for Health ADM Brett Giroir
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health

Surgeon General Vice Admiral Dr. Jerome Adams
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Ernest Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANA President

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