

Statement for the Record
American Nurses Association
Examining Our COVID-19 Response: An Update from Federal Officials
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
March 18, 2021

The American Nurses Association (ANA), representing the interests of the nation’s 4.2 million registered nurses, commends the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee for convening this hearing on “Examining Our COVID-19 Response: An Update from Federal Officials,” and appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

ANA is committed to advancing the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting a safe and ethical work environment, bolstering the health and wellness of nurses, and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. ANA is at the forefront of improving quality of health for all.

The nation’s nursing workforce is integral to the education of the public and the administration of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. With broad distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines underway, it is essential that nurses are informed and have a defined and visible role in the prioritization and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

ANA’s Vaccine Advocacy

As the voice of the nation’s nurses, ANA has established [key principles](#) to guide nurses and other health care professionals’ consideration for COVID-19 vaccines. The nursing workforce not only plays a vital role in educating the public but is integral to safe and effective administration of COVID-19 vaccines to other health care professionals and patients. In February, ANA, along with the American Medical Association and the American Hospital Association, released a [public service announcement](#) (PSA) urging the American public to get the COVID-19 vaccination when it is their turn. The PSA stresses that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and help us all as we work together to defeat COVID-19.

Vaccine Equity

Ensuring the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines is vital to ending the pandemic. We also know that building public confidence in vaccines now and in the future is critical to success particularly for communities of color. According to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation study of early data from states collecting racial and ethnic demographic data, there is a disconnect between those who have received vaccinations and the at-risk groups likely to suffer the worst effects of COVID, i.e., communities of color. The Kaiser report found that to date, vaccination patterns by race and ethnicity appear to be at odds with who the virus has affected the most. Unfortunately, this data is not yet being collected by a majority of states. It will be necessary for states and localities to provide a clearer picture to inform efforts to mitigate the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. Further, data is critical to understanding racial equity concerns in vaccination distribution plans and identifying any disparities that can be addressed through policies, changes in strategy, and education.

ANA calls for a concerted and deliberate effort to provide communities of color ongoing information and facts about COVID-19 vaccines and immunization. Communities of color must have timely access to credible information about authorized COVID-19 vaccines and how to get vaccinated against the virus. Nurses are innate problem solvers and proven innovators. ANA calls for nurses to have a seat at the table to help investigate, identify, and solve problems related to the rollout and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Nurses have an in-depth firsthand knowledge of our health care system and the communities we serve, which is essential to combatting COVID-19 on the frontlines. In addition, ANA is proud of our national President Ernest J. Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN, for participating in a COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial and leading by example for both nurses and communities of color.

Conclusion

Thank you for giving nurses the opportunity to provide input on the importance of increasing vaccinations across the country. ANA stands ready to work with the Committee to find and implement sustainable solutions regarding this important issue. If you have any questions, please contact Ingrida Lusiš, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs, at (301) 628-5081 or Ingrid.Lusis@ana.org.