

Statement for the Record
American Nurses Association
Examining Our COVID-19 Response: An Update from the Frontlines
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
March 9, 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 the Frontlines," 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 the quality of health care for all.

As we mark one year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, ANA would like to share with the Committee recent data on the experiences of nurses continuing to serve on the frontlines. The American Nurses Foundation recently released the nationwide survey results of 22,000 nurses. The survey covered topics such as mental health, vaccines, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and more. The following is a summary of the survey findings.

Mental Health

Nurses, particularly those early in their career, continue to feel exhausted and overwhelmed. According to the findings, 51 percent of nurses surveyed continue to feel exhausted and 43 percent report feeling overwhelmed. A breakdown of findings demonstrates that the mental health of early-career nurses, 34 and under, is impacted most, with 81 percent reporting they are exhausted, 71 percent saying they are overwhelmed, and 65 percent who report being anxious or unable to relax. Nurses who are 55 and older reported some strain on their mental health, with 47 percent reporting feeling exhausted and 31 percent reporting they had a desire to quit.

Vaccines

While 70 percent of the nurses surveyed have received the vaccine, barriers still exist. Among the 30 percent of nurses who reported they have not received the vaccine, nurses who identify as Black or African American make up the largest percentage, 46 percent of those who are not vaccinated. Of the 30 percent of nurses surveyed who have not been vaccinated, 25 percent are undecided on whether they will become vaccinated. Respondents' reasons for not wanting to get the vaccine included being fearful of short- or long-term side effects or not having enough information about the vaccines. In addition, three-in-four nurses agree or strongly agree they are confident having conversations with patients about COVID-19 vaccines.

Personal Protective Equipment

While the PPE supply is reported to have improved in facilities, 27 percent of nurses still say there is an inadequate amount at this time. Nurses continue to indicate issues related to PPE

quality, fit, reuse, and decontamination. Thirty-three percent of nurses report there is no communication plan around PPE inventory at their practice site.

Career Considerations

Overall, even though nurses are overwhelmed and exhausted, 85 percent of nurses surveyed indicated they do not intend to leave the nursing profession. Nurses want, and deserve, a seat at the table when it comes to national health policies and plans for future public health crises. Complete findings from the Pulse on the Nation's Nurses Survey Series, that explore how nurses can be better supported during the COVID-19 pandemic, are also available online at www.nursingworld.org.¹

Thank you for giving nurses the opportunity to speak to the important work our nation's frontline providers are doing on a daily basis. ANA stands ready to work with the Committee to find and implement sustainable solutions regarding these critical issues. If you have any questions, please contact Ingrida Lusic, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs, at (301) 628-5081 or Ingrid.Lusic@ana.org.

¹ <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/health-safety/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus/what-you-need-to-know/year-one-covid-19-impact-assessment-survey/>