



March 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
H-222, 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  
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 20510

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

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Nursing Community Coalition (NCC), which represents 63 national nursing organizations, we would like to thank you for Congress's quick and continuous action to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The NCC is a cross section of education, practice, research, and regulation within the nursing profession. As conversations on how to support our nation and our nurses during this public health challenge continue, we urge you to incorporate the below shared priorities in the COVID-19 legislative package under consideration, these priorities include:

- **Ensure Safety for our Patients and Nurses:** Ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) is available to all health care systems and providers to ensure safe working environments during the COVID-19 pandemic and any future crisis. We urge you to support the immediate distribution of PPE to frontline health care personnel from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), and mandate that sustainable PPE levels should always be maintained at the SNS, including before, during, and following an outbreak, pandemic, or other emergency. It is important to note that without adequate PPE, nurses and patients are being placed at risk for obtaining and/or passing along a deadly virus or suffering other long-term side effects from exposure. It is also vital that we ensure effective and efficient supply-chains for delivery of essential items throughout this crisis.
- **Reauthorize Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs:** Include Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act (H.R.728/S.1399) as this legislation helps meet the nation's demand for nursing services by addressing all aspects of nursing education, practice, recruitment, and retention. This bipartisan bill, which passed the House of Representatives and advanced out of the Senate HELP Committee last year, would provide much needed stability for nursing schools, the workforce, and the community.
- **Increase Funding for Title VIII and NINR:** Increasing funding for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and the National Institute of Nursing Research/National Institutes of

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Health ensures that we have resources in place to support the nursing pipeline and provide evidence based nursing care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Remove all Unnecessary Barriers to Practice:** The Medicare and Medicaid programs still contain burdensome requirements that prevent providers, especially APRNs, from practicing to the full extent of their education and clinical training. Removing these barriers would greatly improve Medicare beneficiary access to care, both for those patients who contract COVID-19, and those with other health care needs, such as patients with diabetes or heart disease. We request the inclusion of provisions that would remove Medicare and Medicaid conditions of participation and certification requirements that prevent APRNs from practicing to the top of their license under State law, such as, but not limited to, those limitations on access to home health, diabetic care, and cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation.
- **Include Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act:** Include the bipartisan Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act (H.R.2150/S.296). Currently, Medicare law prohibits APRNs from certifying Medicare patients for home health benefits and from signing home health plans of care. As the nation continues to battle COVID-19 and experts warn that there may be a shortage of hospital beds in the upcoming weeks, it is critical that Medicare beneficiaries have timely access to home health care services. By including this legislation, you would not only open hospital beds for patients with COVID-19 and other critical care patients, but also allow the beneficiary to remain in their home and decrease potential exposure to the virus or other complications from delays in care.
- **Include Public Health Service Modernization Act:** Include the bipartisan United States Public Health Service Modernization Act of 2019 (S. 2629/H.R. 4870) to create a Ready Reserve Corps in the United States Public Health Service Corps. This Ready Reserve Corps would be used to respond to public emergencies, such as natural disasters or pandemics like COVID-19.
- **Fund Child Care for Health Care Workers:** Include funding to ensure government-funded child care for all healthcare workers dealing with this public health challenge. As schools close and COVID-19 cases continue to increase, it is imperative that healthcare workers are able to utilize government-funded child care services to ensure that they are able to continue their work to combat this pandemic.

We urge Congress to include these shared priorities in the COVID-19 package and as you work to support the health care workforce, and nurses who are on the frontlines. Again, we thank you for your work to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and if the Nursing Community Coalition can be of any assistance to you or your staff during these unprecedented times, please do not hesitate to contact the coalition's Executive Director, Rachel Stevenson, at [rstevenson@thenursingcommunity.org](mailto:rstevenson@thenursingcommunity.org) or at 202-463-6930, ext. 271.

Sincerely,



Rachel Stevenson  
Executive Director  
Nursing Community Coalition

CC:

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn

House Minority Whip Steve Scalise

Senate Majority Whip John Thune

Senate Minority Whip Richard Durbin

Chairman Charles Grassley, Senate Finance Committee

Ranking Member, Ron Wyden, Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Lamar Alexander, Senate HELP Committee

Ranking Member, Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee

Chairman Richard Neal, House Ways & Means Committee

Ranking Member, Kevin Brady, House Ways & Means Committee

Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee

Ranking Member, Greg Walden, House Energy & Commerce Committee