



July 9, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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

On behalf of the 52 undersigned organizations representing the Nursing Community Coalition (NCC), we urge you to include the below priorities in any infrastructure package. The NCC is a cross section of education, practice, research, and regulation within the nursing profession representing Registered Nurses (RNs), Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs),¹ nurse leaders, students, faculty, and researchers who are foundational to the health of the nation. Our members care for patients in all communities, including rural and underserved areas, are at the frontlines of public health challenges, and lead the way to ensure today's science translates to tomorrow's cures. We recognize how vital our current and future nurses are to the fabric of America's health care system. As you begin consideration of public health, education, and workforce infrastructure plans, we strongly request the following areas be included.

Support Nursing Education Infrastructure: Pass the Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN) Act (S.246/H.R.851): To ensure a robust and diverse nursing workforce, investing in the education pathways of our future RNs and APRNs is imperative. The FAAN Act would provide those vital resources to support the needs of nursing students, help retain and hire diverse faculty, modernize nursing education infrastructure, and create and expand clinical education opportunities. These efforts are essential and will help prepare nursing students as they transition from the classroom to the frontlines in communities across the country.

Invest in Public Health Infrastructure: Include Students, Nurses, and APRNs: Since 2008, the local public health departments alone have lost more than 56,000 public health jobs, which

¹ APRNs include certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and nurse practitioners (NPs).

include nurses.² This drastic shortage of public health professionals has been brought into stark reality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Legislation, such as the *Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act (S.674)*, is a strong step in the right direction. We must ensure nurses are at the table as we plan for tomorrow's challenges and create a more equitable system. This includes having nursing students as part of any initial public health emergency plan, ensuring students, nurses, and APRNs are incorporated into all aspects of public health infrastructure needs, and that our public health departments have at least one nurse or APRN on staff.

Prioritize Nursing Workforce Infrastructure: Both for the Patient and Provider:

- *Institute safety measures for the current and future nursing workforce:* A culture of safety in care delivery settings, including violence prevention, is an indispensable aspect of a high-performing, high-quality health care system. Resources and investments are needed to build and sustain safe work environments and preventive practices. Funding should be directed toward concrete violence prevention efforts such as abatement of known risks (e.g., with respect to building exteriors and interiors) and establishment of robust ongoing prevention programs.
- *Invest in Nursing Workforce Programs and Research:* Even before the pandemic, demand for nurses and APRNs were expected to grow.^{3,4} Given the professional and personal impact of COVID-19, we need to ensure we have an adequate workforce to meet the growing demand of an aging population. During these critical times, bold investments in longstanding and successful federal programs, such as Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), are essential. These programs have a proven track record, continue to help ensure the health and wellbeing of all communities, and support nurse scientists whose research establishes the scientific basis for quality patient care.
- *Include funding to ensure childcare coverage is available for our frontline healthcare providers.*

Include Innovative Infrastructure Initiatives, such as Telehealth: As we have witnessed during COVID-19, increased access and flexibility in telehealth policies is an essential component of providing high-quality care to patients in all communities, including rural, urban, and underserved areas. To ensure these services are accessible to all those that need care, expanding broadband access and creating a more affordable system is key. Legislation, such as *CONNECT for Health Act (S.1512)*, helps expand access to these services while addressing geographic limitations, expanding originating site restrictions, and permanently removing restrictions.

The above priorities highlight many needs, but one common theme, mental health, remains a concerning topic that Congress must consider within and outside the infrastructure conversation. Caring for the caretaker has become even more important as we witness the mental stress COVID-19 has had on our frontline workers. In fact, an American Nurses Foundation survey found that 51 percent of nurses continue to feel exhausted and 43 percent

² National Association of County & City Health Officials. The Forces of Change in America's Local Public Health System: 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/2018-Forces-of-Change-Main-Report.pdf>

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (20). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nursepractitioners.htm>

report feeling overwhelmed.⁵ 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.⁶ This extends to nursing students as well, as nearly a quarter of graduate nursing students reported elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression over the past year.⁷ Sadly, some have given all as more than 3,600 health care workers have lost their lives while fighting COVID-19, 32% of whom were nurses.⁸ We appreciate the resources dedicated to health providers mental health in the American Rescue Plan Act, but more must be done. We strongly recommend Congress includes mental health resources and funding, specifically for our nation's nursing students, nurses, and APRNs, in any legislative package moving forward.

As we continue to modernize infrastructure in America, it is essential that resources for nursing education, research, and the workforce are included. Therefore, we urge Congress to incorporate these shared priorities in any infrastructure package as we support our current and future nursing workforce who are vital to our health care system and the public health of our nation. If the Nursing Community Coalition can be of any assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact the coalition's Executive Director, Rachel Stevenson, at rstevenson@thenursingcommunity.org or at 202-463-6930, ext. 271.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses
Academy of Neonatal Nursing
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Heart Failure Nurses
American Association of Neuroscience Nurses
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Association of Post-Acute Care Nursing
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Nursing Informatics Association
American Organization for Nursing Leadership
American Society for Pain Management Nursing
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses
American Public Health Association, Public Health Nursing Section

⁵ American Nurses Foundation. Year One COVID-19 Impact Assessment Survey. Retrieved from: <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/>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Nurse Educator (2021). A Survey of Mental Health in Graduate Nursing Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved from: https://journals.lww.com/nurseeducatoronline/Abstract/2021/07000/A_Survey_of_Mental_Health_in_Graduate_Nursing.13.aspx

⁸ The Guardian and Kaiser Health News. Lost on the frontlines. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2020/aug/11/lost-on-the-frontline-covid-19-coronavirus-us-healthcare-workers-deaths-database>

Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Public Health Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Association of Veterans Affairs Nurse Anesthetists
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
Dermatology Nurses' Association
Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
International Association of Forensic Nurses
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Black Nurses Association
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National League for Nursing
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
Oncology Nursing Society
Organization for Associate Degree Nursing
Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society
Society of Pediatric Nurses
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society

CC:

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn
House Minority Whip Steve Scalise
Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin
Senate Minority Whip John Thune
Chair Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee
Ranking Member Richard Burr, Senate HELP Committee
Chairman Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee
Vice Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee
Chair Patty Murray, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Ranking Member Roy Blunt, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee
Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers, House Energy & Commerce Committee
Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Committee

Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee
Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Ranking Member Tom Cole, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies