

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 Kevin McCarthy House Minority Leader United States House of Representatives H-204, 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 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), 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-nurse-ractitioners.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/ 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