



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING

transforming health policy and practice through nursing knowledge

March 23, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
US Senate
US Capitol Building, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
US House of Representatives
US Capitol Building, H-222
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
US Senate
US Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) urges you to work quickly to agree upon and pass critical legislation needed to combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Nurses and other healthcare providers are on the frontlines battling the devastating effects of this pandemic. Each day that passes is a missed opportunity to protect healthcare providers and the public. The Academy joins with our colleagues at the **American Nurses Association, American Hospital Association, and the American Medical Association in calling for a minimum of \$100 billion for hospitals and healthcare providers in the third supplemental legislative package Congress is currently considering.**

The Academy serves the public by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis and dissemination of nursing knowledge. We appreciate the Congressional response to date on COVID-19; however, we strongly urge you to provide significantly increased resources to those on the frontlines as the virus' impact becomes increasingly dire. Whether in the hospital, other care settings, or in the community, their bravery, duty, and courage is inspiring. If we do not provide immediate resources to those providing the care, we will fail to stop this pandemic.

The United States now has the third highest number of coronavirus cases, surpassing 35,000.¹ We cannot stress enough how vitally important it is that we increase the number of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other supplies, such as ventilators, now. Nurses provide the intervention and care 24 hours a day, seven days a week that is needed for the recovery of COVID-19 patients. In order for them to stay healthy and continue to deliver care, nurses need PPE and other supplies. The Academy has called upon the President to use the Defense Production Act authority immediately.

However, more emergency resources will be needed for the healthcare system (in the acute care setting and in the community) as the pandemic continues to escalate. **As hospitals prepare for surges in COVID-19 cases, we must also invest in the critical work of public health infrastructure.** The on-the-ground triaging, education, and protection provided by public health nurses, such as those in the

Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, as well as local and state health departments will be essential to support hospitals as they manage the influx of testing and confirmed cases.

Just as critically, the need for resources is desperate in rural, medically underserved, and health profession shortage areas. As noted in a recent *Kaiser Health News* report,² in rural America - 18 million people live in counties that have hospitals but no intensive care unit, and about a quarter of them 60 or older. Nearly 11 million more reside in counties with no hospital, some 2.7 million of whom are seniors. Healthcare providers and health systems in these areas lack supplies and need resources to prepare now for the patient surge that will occur as the pandemic accelerates.

We must take care of healthcare providers by increasing access to resources for their families when they are on the frontlines. Nurses have children and aging parents to care for too. Access to safe, affordable child and older adult care as well as support services through informal and formal networks during this crisis is paramount. Providing this type of support to healthcare providers as they care for patients will enable more providers to be on the frontlines right when we need them the most. We call upon Congress for increased support in this particular area in the third supplemental legislative package.

Finally, research continues to be a priority and needs supplemental funding. Across the country, academic research centers are searching for answers to better testing, faster results, and a vaccine. Like others in the research community, the Academy supports increased funding for basic, biomedical, and behavioral science. Agencies like the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Federal Drug Administration will need additional resources, both intramural and extramural, to ensure their research capacity does not drop during this critical time.

We strongly recommend a minimum of \$100 billion be included in the third supplemental legislative package for healthcare providers, hospitals, and other care settings in order to fight COVID-19 as well as additional resources for the public health and research infrastructures. We stand ready to work with you in the battle against this pandemic. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Academy's Senior Director of Policy, Christine Murphy, at cmurpy@aannet.org or 202-777-1174.

Sincerely,



Eileen Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, FAAN
President

¹ Coronavirus Research Center. John Hopkins University, Retrieved from <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>

² Schulte, F. E. L. (2020, March 21). Millions Of Older Americans Live In Counties With No ICU Beds As Pandemic Intensifies. Retrieved from <https://khn.org/news/as-coronavirus-spreads-widely-millions-of-older-americans-live-in-counties-with-no-icu-beds/>