



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING

transforming health policy and practice through nursing knowledge

March 22, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) is writing to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and members of the Coronavirus Taskforce on March 18, 2020. Along with leaders in the nursing community, we stressed the critical response needed to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Academy serves the public by advancing health policy through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge.

This is an unprecedented time for our country and it was an honor to represent the nursing profession. Nurses are on the frontlines battling the devastating effects of the coronavirus. Whether in the hospital, other care settings, or in the community their bravery, duty, and courage is inspiring. We appreciate your Administration's response to COVID-19 to date, and **ask that federal action is heightened as the virus' impact becomes increasingly dire.** We must all do our part to flatten the curve and save lives nationwide.

As I mentioned in our discussion, there are three items that need immediate attention:

- Support nurses and healthcare providers who are on the frontlines;
- Protect the most vulnerable populations; and
- Increase access, scale, speed, and accuracy of testing

Support Nurses and Healthcare Providers on the Frontlines

Nurses and healthcare providers are the most valuable resource in fighting COVID-19. If we do not give them the support they need in order to be in the care setting, we will fail to stop this pandemic. On the day of our meeting, March 18th, you used executive authority to invoke the Defense Production Act (DPA). **We applaud this action, and stand with our colleagues at the American Nurses Association, American Hospital Association, and American Medical Association, as well as others, who have called on you to use the DPA authority immediately.**

Each day that passes is a missed opportunity to protect healthcare providers and the public. The United States now has the third highest number of coronavirus cases, surpassing 26,000.¹ We cannot stress enough how vitally important it is that we increase the number of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other supplies now. The strategic stockpile, donations, and volunteer efforts by industry will not be enough. Federal agencies need to quickly mobilize to push vital supplies to state and local communities to distribute to its healthcare workforce and hospitals.

Major metropolitan areas are already affected but we cannot forget rural 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 them are seniors. Healthcare providers and health systems in these areas lack PPE and other supplies. They need to prepare now for the patient surge that will occur as the pandemic accelerates.

Moreover, we must take care of our frontline healthcare providers by increasing access to resources. 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. We are glad to see that this is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) considerations for state and local community leaders as noted on the guidance for *15 Days to Slow the Spread of Coronavirus*.³ We call upon the Administration for increased support.

Protect the Most Vulnerable Populations

The Academy stands with the national and state calls for social distancing as it is essential to further prevent the spread of this pandemic. We also know that social distancing must be consistent, reinforced, and elevated. The public must understand that they cannot take this pandemic lightly. Clear, coordinated, and fact-based communication about this grave situation is vital. We commend the CDC for its public service announcements regarding social distancing and urge for its continuation so that citizens stay home to save lives.

Vulnerable populations, of all age groups, such as those with pre-existing conditions and immunodeficiencies, older adults, socially isolated individuals, as well people who have serious acute and chronic medical conditions, require essential safe guards that extend to their family members and other caregivers. Moreover, older adults are at higher risk for COVID-19, and the reality is many grandparents are taking care of their grandchildren and support is needed if they become sick. Truly, support is needed if anyone becomes ill and they need to be able to afford the care that is required. The Academy urges the Administration to consider all feasible options for these individuals and their families, such as increasing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage for states.

We must also consider those in densely populated living environments like Veteran group homes, long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, and others living in crowded conditions where social distancing is difficult. Active monitoring and testing are needed as community spread is already occurring in these environments and has the potential to expand with further devastating impact.

Increase Access, Scale, Speed, and Accuracy of Testing

Testing needs to be widespread and accessible with results available quickly. As healthcare professionals are on the frontlines in our communities, they need prioritized access to testing themselves. Our Fellows have also shared that the screening procedures for triaging patients need to be updated as well and more aggressive so that additional prioritization goes to patients with clear symptoms.

The Academy represents expert nursing Fellows around the globe that have documented experience in responding to public health crises. Within the organization's Expert Panels, focused on [24 aspects of care, populations, and systems](#), are recognized leaders who are working within their communities to

combat the spread of COVID-19. We all stand at the ready to battle this pandemic. The Academy commends the commitment and dedication of all who are working to keep individuals healthy. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact the Academy's Senior Director of Policy, Christine Murphy, at cmurphy@aannet.org or 202-777-1170.

Most respectfully,



Eileen Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, FAAN
President



Suzanne Miyamoto, PhD, RN, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer

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/>

³ Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). (2020, February 11). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/15-day-pause.html>