



**National League
for Nursing**

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives 1236
Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Vice President Pence, Speaker Pelosi, and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and McCarthy:

On behalf of the National League for Nursing (NLN), the oldest nursing organization in the United States, I am writing to urge you to ensure that personal protection equipment (PPE) is available to all health care systems, facilities, nurses and other providers to ensure safe working environments during the current COVID-19 pandemic and any future public health crisis. The League represents more than 1,200 nursing schools, 40,000 members, and 25 regional constituent leagues. We are deeply concerned that nurses across all practice settings and facilities are facing severe shortages of all PPE, leaving many unprotected and potentially infected by the virus.

In addition, the NLN believes that guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) about the transmission of coronavirus should be cleared and better aligned. Recent guidelines from both agencies have differed on what masks or respirators are needed to protect nurses and other health care providers and workers treating patients with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. Before any additional guidance is released, the appropriate agencies must have clear scientific evidence that the change in standards is proven to keep clinicians, their families and their patients safe.

As you know, the Food and Drug Administration has approved N95 respirators to provide the minimum appropriate protections to health care workers. While we appreciate the challenges of ensuring an adequate PPE supply, the NLN is concerned that CDC recommendations to reduce the requirements for respirators are based solely on supply chain and manufacturing challenges, and not evidence-based findings.

The NLN believes that the Administration, under the new guidelines for respirators and masks during the pandemic, must investigate the transmission mode for COVID-19 and provide clear communication so that decisions about appropriate PPE are based on the best information available. We also urge Congress to include language in the next COVID-19 relief package to ensure that the CDC educates the public on the data-driven transmission science behind these decisions.

While the Administration has announced that PPE production is ramping up and called on states to negotiate directly with manufacturers, the NLN maintains that nurses and other health care providers should never be placed in a position where they don't have the protective equipment needed to safely do their jobs. There must be a mechanism for States to acquire PPE if they are having trouble negotiating on their own for the proper quantities or at a cost that is appropriate.

On behalf of NLN members and all nurses, we urge Congress to:

- Require the CDC to provide science-based information on the transmission of the virus so that nurses can make the best decisions on the appropriate level of protection.
- Support the immediate distribution of PPE to frontline nurses and other health care personnel from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).
- Mandate that sustainable PPE levels should always be maintained at the SNS, including before, during, and following an outbreak, pandemic, or other emergency.
- Require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study to review the actions of all applicable federal agencies to identify the causes of failures in preparation for the next wave of COVID-19 or any other pandemic affecting the United States.
- Require a GAO study on the current supply chain of PPE in the U.S. and worldwide to prevent future avoidable shortages.
- Require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop reporting requirements to better track shortages of PPE.

The nation's nurses and other health care providers are responding to this public health crisis – they deserve appropriate support to care for patients safely and effectively. This includes clear, evidenced-based protocols and the highest level of protection in order to treat infected individuals and prevent the spread of the coronavirus in health care facilities and the community. The NLN strongly urges Congress and the Administration to exhaust every feasible option available to increase PPE production and prioritize distribution to frontline providers and health care facilities.

Thank you for your efforts to protect the public health and support the nation's nurses and other health care professionals. We are eager to work with you to identify and implement policies to address this crisis and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss them further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beverly Malone', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Beverly Malone, PhD, RN, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer