



April 1, 2020

The Honorable Henry McMaster
Office of the Governor
SC State House
1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor McMaster,

I am reaching out to you today on behalf of the South Carolina Nurses Association, to advocate for the many nurses working during this unprecedented pandemic event. Over the past weeks, we have been receiving increasing numbers of calls from nurses that are reporting extremely challenging work conditions including but not limited to inappropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), reuse of PPE, inadequate staffing, and rapidly changing protocols. Nurses are also contacting us to report that they are self-quarantining.

Nurses are rightfully concerned as they are working with infected patients without adequate supplies or worse, having to reuse supplies, risking the possibility of infecting themselves, other patients, and their own families. We are also hearing from nurse managers and leaders that in some facilities, they are unable to get nurses tested for COVID-19. This is extremely concerning and frightening for nurse managers and nurses.

We are very concerned about South Carolina's nursing workforce. Before the current COVID-19 pandemic, South Carolina was projected to have the 4th worst nursing shortage in the country. It is a critical point to note because we do not currently have an adequate workforce. As a result, nurses are working longer shifts with inappropriate personal protective equipment. This raises the likelihood that they will make a mistake, contract COVID-19, and in turn, become a victim and vector of the virus, increasing nosocomial infections within the hospital. The ill nurse further exacerbates the nursing shortage.

We are very troubled about the lack of PPE available and are asking that nurses are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment, adequate staffing, and testing to ensure that they are not transmitting the virus to fellow healthcare workers, patients, and families. We must act now to protect our workforce. Healthcare cannot be provided without an essential workforce. If we do not protect our workforce, who will?

We would like to discuss with you how we may work collectively together to protect our critical workforce. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelly A. Bouthillet".

Kelly A. Bouthillet DNP, APRN, CCNS, ACNP-BC
President, South Carolina Nurses Association

cc: Thornton Kirby, SC Hospital Association
Richard Toomey, SC DHEC
Senator Tom Davis

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Wise and humane management of the patient is the best safeguard against infection - Florence Nightingale