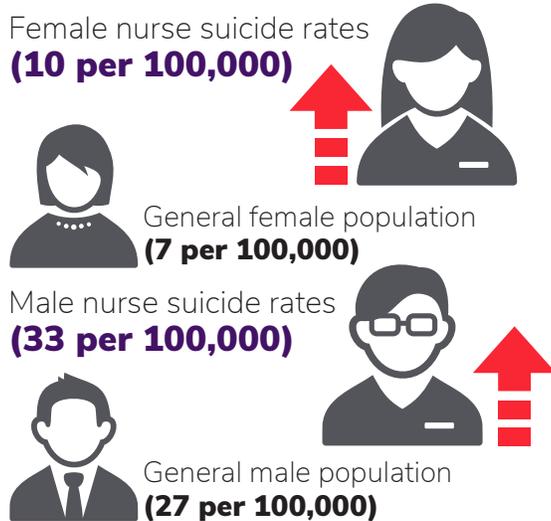


### The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Exacerbated the Mental Health Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is resulting in an increase in mental health problems among Americans. A CDC report released in August 2020 found that more than 40 percent of U.S. adults are suffering adverse mental health or behavioral health conditions. This includes 31 percent who reported symptoms of anxiety or depression and 13 percent saying they use substances to cope with the stress caused by the pandemic.

Furthermore, about 11 percent of people had seriously considered suicide in the prior month, more than double the rate in a 2018 CDC survey. Alarming, among respondents between the ages of 18 and 25, more than one-quarter had seriously considered suicide.



Source: Judy Davidson, RN, DNP of the UC San Diego School of Medicine and colleagues

The crisis has significantly affected emergency nurses and other health workers. Long hours, stressful conditions, and ongoing shortages of critical personal protective equipment began having a negative effect on the well-being of these workers early in the pandemic. The impact of these conditions continues to this day. Many have left the profession. Others have attempted or committed suicide. According to the 2020 CDC report, 54 percent of essential workers, a category that includes health care workers, reported having at least one negative mental or behavioral health condition.

### As Nurses Suffer, So Will Patient Care

Data from the CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System indicates that nurses die by suicide at significantly higher rates than non-nurses. Moreover, health care professionals, including emergency nurses, often feel stigmatized or that their professional future will be at risk if they seek assistance for mental health issues.

Clearly, more needs to be done to promote the mental and behavioral well-being of health care workers risking their lives to care for their communities. By fully supporting these

professionals, they are better able to serve their patients and their communities.

### The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act

This bipartisan, bicameral legislation will help reduce and prevent mental and behavioral health conditions, as well as increase access to evidence-based treatment for nurses, physicians, medical students and other health care professionals, especially those who continue to be overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure continued patient access to health care, it is vital that we work to preserve and protect the health of our medical workforce.

H.R. 1667/S. 610 will:

- Establish grants for training nursing or medical students, residents, or health care professionals to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, substance use disorders, and other mental health conditions;
- Identify and disseminate best practices for reducing and preventing suicide and burnout among health care professionals;
- Launch a national education and awareness campaign to encourage health care workers to seek support and treatment;
- Establish grants for employee education, peer-support programming, and mental and behavioral health treatment; and
- Commission a federal study into health care professional mental health and burnout, as well as barriers to seeking appropriate care.

In addition to the Emergency Nurses Association, the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* is supported by more than 45 national health care organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Emergency Physicians, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Hospital Association, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, and Mental Health America.

### House Request: Cosponsor and Support the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (H.R. 1667).

*H.R. 1667 was introduced by Rep. Susan Wild (D-PA) on March 8, 2021. The legislation has been referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee.*

### Senate Request: Cosponsor and Support the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S. 610).

*S. 610 was introduced by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) on March 4, 2021. The legislation has been referred to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.*