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March 19, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room H-307  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room S-128  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room S-128  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As the premier nursing organization on the frontlines in providing emergency care to patients in our nation's hospitals, the Emergency Nurses Association is writing to request that Congress include a comprehensive support program to ensure that our health care system and health care workers have the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and other resources to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Further, given the urgency of this issue, we urge the inclusion of this assistance in the COVID-19 economic relief legislation being considered this week.

As you well know, our nation's hospitals, including their emergency departments, have already begun to face shortages of PPE and other important medical equipment due to the COVID-19 outbreak. At ENA, we are receiving reports from frontline emergency nurses of shortfalls, rationing or the inappropriate re-use of N95 masks, protective goggles, gloves, gowns and powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs). In addition, health care workers have also reported shortages or dangerously low supplies of ventilators, respirators, hospital beds and other equipment.

In response, we request a federal initiative to provide funding to boost capacity in hospitals, ramp up production of PPE and other supplies, and further assist the private sector to help meet the fast-growing demand for essential medical equipment. Without such a broad-based program, we are not only endangering America's health care workforce, but the many millions of patients they serve.

The Emergency Nurses Association appreciates all your efforts in addressing this unprecedented public health emergency. We urge you to follow-up on the bills already enacted into law with legislation that focuses on ensuring that our frontline health care personnel have the equipment to both protect themselves and provide patients with the highest-quality care possible.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Mike Hastings, MSN, RN, CEN  
2020 President  
Emergency Nurses Association