

April 4, 2023

The Honorable Dick Stein
Ohio House of Representative

The Honorable J.D Vance
United States Senator

The Honorable Robert E. Latta
US House of Representatives

Dear Members of Congress:

My name is Katelyn Howard and I am a recent graduate of Firelands Regional Medical Center School of Nursing in Sandusky, Ohio. I am writing a letter to address my concerns based on what I have experienced since being in school throughout the pandemic. The Nursing shortage that continues to rise is concerning and the American Nurses Association continues to call on Congress to take meaningful action to address the shortage that has occurred all over the nation. There are needs that need to be met to investigate the root cause of the nursing shortage. One of the root causes is the staffing agencies and the travel nurse positions which will eventually cause a much larger problem. Staffing agencies as well as travel agencies continue to provide nurses with flexibility, greater resources and higher pay. Many nurses are choosing this pathway, retiring, leaving direct patient care or leaving the profession all together.

These travel nurses are contracted to work short stints at understaffed hospitals across the country for double, triple or quadruple their usual pay. Travel nursing has grew by 40% since 2021. Pressure imposed by COVID-19 have piled on top of other challenges, such as workforce conditions being a big problem. At the same time, demographic factors, such as increased life expectancy, aging of the baby boomer generation, and the average age of nurses continue to rise which means that more nurses are at the retirement age each year.

Nurses have the right to seek employment that meet their financial needs that allows them to work in safe conditions to provide quality care to all of their patients. Fewer nurses mean that each nurse must care for more patients leading to errors and decreased ability to monitor patients. Adequate staffing levels can reduce mortality rate, shorten hospital stays and reduce adverse events such as infections. Nursing shortage has a significant impact on patient outcomes.

The nursing shortage crisis will not be solved just by a short term approach. Nurses are the backbone on the health system and deserve respect and to be valued. These shortages have been around for decades and the COVID-19 pandemic will not be the last time the United States struggles to maintain an adequate nursing workforce. Major investments are needed for the shortage which should be started by addressing the pay, hours, and ratios.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this letter from a concerned new grad RN.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Howard

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