

Elevating the voice of nurses



■ Most trusted profession ■ LGBTQ+ care ■ Racism and nurses

A federal agenda for action

Elevating the voice of nurses on the pandemic and beyond

By Kristina Weger and Samuel Hewitt

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its third year, the American Nurses Association's (ANA) federal legislative and regulatory agenda centers on the crucial role nurses play in the health of patients and the nation and on guaranteeing a strong nursing workforce prepared to meet current and future demands. ANA also is prioritizing engagement with the administration and Congress on safe work environments, occupational safety, health equity, public health, and nurses' health and well-being. Together with its constituent and state nurses associations, advancing these priorities reflects ANA's strategic goals and positions, while remaining responsive to emerging issues.

Nurse staffing crisis

As the pandemic accelerated it became evident that the already existing nursing shortage would mount, adding challenges across the country. In response, ANA examined available options to amplify the issue with law and policymakers and sought viable short- and long-term solutions to address the shortages. As part of those efforts, the association conducted a series of listening sessions with nurse leaders to discuss staffing shortages and state-level actions taken to mitigate staffing challenges. Every state leader who participated reported some level of nursing shortage in varying care settings. State leaders also shared some of the underlying causes of nurses' departures, such as increased instances of workplace violence, deteriorated work environments, and insufficient focus on maintaining nurses' mental health and well-being as they continue to serve on the frontlines of the pandemic.

In September 2021, to further amplify the critical issue of nurse staffing shortages, ANA sent a letter to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra calling on the administration to declare the shortage a national crisis and outlining ways to collaborate to identify and implement long- and short-term solutions. Subsequently, ANA met with several key administration officials and the association looks forward to building on that engagement in 2022 to actualize real solutions.



These actions have started 2022 in a big way. In addition to engaging with federal health agencies, ANA continues the drumbeat to the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to ensure they know the challenges nurses are facing, with key issues highlighted here.

Mental health

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on nurses' mental health, especially those early in their careers. The association has been advocating for the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S.610/H.R. 1667). If passed into law, this legislation would direct funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to train current and future health professionals on how to prevent suicide, burnout, and substance abuse. Key provisions in the bill establish a national evidence-based education and awareness initiative to encourage healthcare professionals to seek support and care for their mental health and substance use concerns. This act also would teach healthcare professionals how to identify and respond to the risk factors associated with suicide, mental health issues, and substance use disorders while reducing the stigma associated with seeking help for these concerns.

Public health

Now is the time to reinvest in the nation's public health infrastructure and workforce. More funding for physical infrastructure and personnel will be an improvement, but our nation lacks the capacity to educate and train future nurses and other healthcare professionals to provide the care patients need.

ANA supports the Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN) Act (S.246/H.R.851), which would invest \$1 billion to strengthen the capacity of nursing schools. Some provisions of the Act would:

- diversify faculty to educate the future nursing workforce
- help modernize curricula
- establish nurse-led intradisciplinary and inter-professional educational partnerships
- support schools of nursing and healthcare partners to establish or expand clinical education.

A \$500 million version of the FAAN Act was included in the Build Back Better Act passed by the House in 2021. At the time of this writing, the Build Back Better Act is stalled in the Senate. The association will continue to lobby for this important legislation.

Mandatory overtime

Nurses are all too familiar with the stress and danger fatigue poses while caring for patients. Regulations to limit work hours have been in place since the 1930s for high-risk occupations, starting with the aviation, trucking, and marine industries. Unfortunately, healthcare has been slower in adopting work hour regulations, including policies regarding mandatory overtime for nurses.

Mandatory overtime is a dangerous tool healthcare facilities have long used as a short-term solution to staffing challenges, and in many cases, it is standard practice. ANA worked with Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) to introduce the Nurse Overtime and Patient Safety Act in 2019 and plans to have it reintroduced this spring. Some provisions of this bill, if passed into law, would:

- limit mandatory overtime for nurses
- include whistleblower protections for nurses who file complaints against their employers
- impose civil penalties for violations
- preserve state laws that provide greater protections with respect to mandatory overtime for nurses.

Preventing workplace violence

At least one in four nurses is assaulted on the job, which is why preventing workplace violence continues to be a top priority. In April 2021, the House passed the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1195). Thousands of nurses who participated in ANA's grassroots advocacy campaigns (RNaction.org) contributed to passage of this bill. A previous version passed the House in 2019 but was not taken up in the Senate. This time, vote totals increased to 254-166 and the bill passed with solid bipartisan support.

The bill directs the Department of Labor (DOL) to promulgate a safety standard that requires employers in healthcare and social services settings to implement comprehensive plans that protect their employees from workplace violence. DOL has had voluntary guidelines since 1996 but lacks enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance. ANA will continue to push for passage of this legislation in the Senate.

Equity and disparities

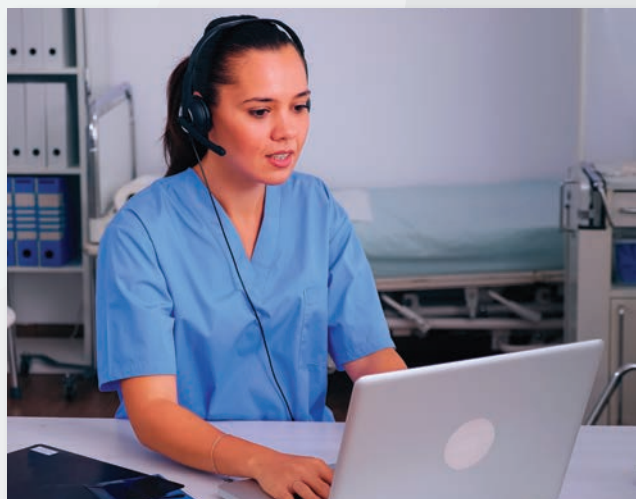
Disparities in risk and access became starkly and immediately evident in how COVID-19 affects Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, compared to White

populations. ANA will continue to be prominent in calling for Congress to prioritize equity in access to care and prevention.

As nurses well know, progress toward health equity requires policy changes across the healthcare system. ANA joins healthcare partners in supporting bills aimed at improving maternal and infant health outcomes, especially to address disproportionate risks of death and complications that Black mothers and their children face. ANA also supports legislative initiatives to diversify the nursing workforce, a critical component of health equity infrastructure.

Pandemic safety protections

ANA continues to engage with the administration about enforcing COVID-19 safety protections in healthcare settings. ANA has urged the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to prioritize the safety and well-being of all healthcare personnel during the pandemic. ANA supports a multi-layered approach, including provision of appropriate personal protective equipment, protocols to screen and test for COVID-19, physical distancing measures, cleaning and hand hygiene, and access to vaccines. In addition, ANA has consistently advocated for a permanent OSHA standard that would protect healthcare personnel from infectious diseases in future pandemics.



Telehealth

Telehealth services have increased exponentially due to the still-in-effect emergency waivers that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services disseminated in 2020. These waivers—which ANA is pushing to be made permanent—lifted many barriers to accessing services through telehealth technologies. Removal of geographic and originating site restrictions remains a priority to ensure that patients can access services independent of where they reside. ANA's agenda also prioritizes expanded reimbursement for telehealth covering audio only and remote patient monitoring.

Opioid epidemic

Although the pandemic has dominated headlines during the last 2 years, unfortunately the opioid epidemic has ramped up, claiming lives and upending communities across the nation. The association is engaging with policymakers on the vital role nurses play in addressing and caring for patients with opioid and other substance use disorders.



Looking at congressional action, ANA has endorsed the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act (H.R. 1384/S. 445), which was introduced early last year. This legislation would remove the requirement for additional continuing education to be able to provide medication-assisted treatment to patients with opioid use disorder. This act also would eliminate the sunset of other advanced practice RN authority to prescribe buprenorphine. ANA not only is monitoring the progress of this legislation but also working with congressional offices to introduce additional legislation aimed at addressing addiction treatment, providing resources, and expanding practice authority for nurses.

ANA also is engaged with policymakers examining this issue. The association remains active in the National Academy of Medicine's Action Collaborative

on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic, whose work is ongoing. Moreover, ANA is closely monitoring any federal agency action and opportunities to provide comment on proposed guidance and regulations. Efforts to address the opioid epidemic are expected to ramp up in 2022.

As the year unfolds ANA will remain alert and agile in advocating on behalf of America's 4.3 million registered nurses.

It's important for all nurses to engage in the process whether through your state association or nationally through ANA's grassroots programs. ANA looks forward to building on progress to make 2022 a better year for nurses.

— Kristina Weger and Samuel J. Hewitt are senior associate directors in Policy and Government Affairs at ANA.

Resources

RNAction: Get involved and learn more about critical nursing issues. (RNaction.org)

Capitol Beat Blog: Stay up to date on the latest healthcare policy and advocacy. (anacapitolbeat.org)

ANA urges Congress to act on work environments

The American Nurses Association (ANA) continues to call on Congress and the administration to take meaningful action to address the chronic causes of cyclical nursing shortages that have occurred over the past 50 years. Although overhead costs associated with staffing agencies recently have been targeted as a driver of staffing shortages, they're only one symptom of a much larger systemic problem. More needs to be done to effectively investigate and mitigate the root causes of nursing shortages. Changes must be made to provide better work environments, appropriate compensation, and benefits, as well as to make patient safety a top priority to attract and retain nurses today and in the future.

Nurses, like all other Americans, have the right to seek employment that meets their financial needs, provides safe working conditions, and allows them to deliver quality care to their patients. Even before the pandemic, many nurses felt undervalued by their employers. The pandemic has exacerbated this issue. Nurses report that they're working too many hours with too many patients, and many are under

constant stress given their responsibilities plus the fear of being assaulted at work. Staffing agencies may in some circumstances provide them with greater resources, flexibility, and choices about their work environments, so some nurses are choosing this option or retiring and leaving direct patient care.

Recently, Reps. Peter Welch (D-VT) and Morgan Griffith (R-VA) coauthored a letter to the White House COVID-19 Task Force calling for an investigation into staffing agencies for price gouging during the pandemic. We applaud efforts to end price gouging by agencies, but we call on Congress to ensure that travel nurses aren't negatively impacted in the process.

The nursing shortage crisis won't be solved by a short-term piecemeal approach. Nurses across the continuum of care are the backbone of the health-care system and deserve to be respected and valued. We call on healthcare organizations and private payors to join nurses in working with Congress and the administration to find a sustainable solution to address nursing shortages.

Nurses ranked most honest and ethical professionals 20 years in a row

The American Nurses Association (ANA) congratulates nurses for maintaining the number 1 ranking in Gallup's annual Most Honest and Ethical Professions Poll. The American public rated nurses the highest among a host of professionals, including medical doctors, grade-school teachers, and pharmacists.

"I want to congratulate every nurse across the nation for earning this well-deserved recognition," said ANA President Ernest J. Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN. "The fact that this is the 20th year in a row that the American public has voted nurses number 1 is a testament to your consistent professionalism, despite the challenges of the persistent pandemic. We are all indebted to you and will continue to acknowledge and honor your courage, commitment, and expertise during the COVID-19 pandemic and well beyond."

According to the poll, 81% of Americans rated nurses' honesty and ethical standards as "very high" or "high." The second highest-rated profession, medical doctors, was rated 14 percentage points behind nursing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed a spotlight on nurses, reinforcing the critical contributions they make to our healthcare system, while also highlighting the devastating impact it has had on their mental health and well-being.



"I am deeply concerned about not only the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of individual nurses, but on the health of the entire nursing profession," said Grant. "The pandemic has exacerbated a long-standing nursing shortage, especially in areas experiencing high numbers of COVID-19 cases. The long-term consequences for the profession, the entire healthcare delivery system, and ultimately, on the health of the nation are potentially dire."

On behalf of the nation's nurses, ANA continues to work with Congress, the administration, and key stakeholders to identify and address long- and short-term solutions to the shortage.

New *OJIN* topic explores racism in nursing

In January, *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* published five new articles on the topic, "Racism and Nurses: Diverse Perspectives." Here are some highlights.

Historically, the language used to address racism in nursing in the United States has not been successful. Authors Kechinyere C. Iheduru-Anderson, DNP, RN, CNE, CWCN, an ANA-Michigan member, and Monika M. Wahi, MPH, CPH, explain why and describe innovative approaches to racial discourse to directly address racism in healthcare and nursing education.

Indigenous Māori nurses in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are a critical part of the health workforce. Authors Denise Wilson, PhD, RN, FCNA(NZ), FAAN, FRSNZ, Pipi Barton, MPhil, RN, and Zoe Tipa, PhD, RN, discuss the history and impact of the concept of Kawa Whakaruruhau, a term to describe cultural safety, and critique the endemic racism that challenges Indigenous Māori nurses.

The rise of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practitioners in academic nursing has become more important as institutions seek to achieve health equity.

Sheldon D. Fields, PhD, RN, CRNP, FNP-BC, AACRN, FAAN, FAANP, FNAP, an ANA-New York member, and colleagues offer recommendations for establishing a DEI practitioner position.

Tiffany M. Montgomery, PhD, MSHP, RNC-OB, and colleagues describe five themes that emerged across three phases of Black nurse scholars' educational journeys. Their self-study considered lived experiences in spaces not traditionally designed to support minoritized women, and they include insight into the limits and benefits of fellowship programs specific to Black nurse scholars.

Transracial/transcultural adoption is defined as a child of one race or ethnic group placed with parent(s) of a different race or ethnic group. Jessica Castner, PhD, RN-BC, FAAN, FAEN, a 2021-2022 National Academy of Medicine Distinguished Nurse Scholar-in-Residence and ANA member, and Karen J. Foli, PhD, MSN, RN, FAAN, Indiana State Nurses Association member, examine nursing practice considerations for transracially adoptive patients and provide an overview of epidemiology and relevant care and legal issues.

Plan ahead: Honor America's nurses in May

As the coronavirus pandemic stretches into a third year, it's important to honor and recognize nurses' essential contributions to health and healthcare. Plan now to participate in the month-long recognition for Nurses Month in May. In 2020, the ANA Enterprise expanded National Nurses Week—traditionally celebrated May 6 to 12—to a full month of recognition to honor the nation's most trusted profession and largest segment of the healthcare workforce.

The overall theme for Nurses Month each year is "You Make a Difference." Each week will focus on activities to support nurses, advance nursing practice, and encourage future generations of nurses. The weekly themes are:

- Self-care Week: May 1-7
- Recognition Week: May 8-14
- Professional Development Week: May 15-21
- Community Engagement Week: May 22-28

To promote Nurses Month, access the Nurses Month toolkit, which includes a Nurses Month logo to use on promotional materials, in social media, and at celebrations and activities. You'll also find tools to promote Nurses Month in local communities and



media. You can download the toolkit and logo from <https://nursesmonth.org/>.

National Nurses Month Webinar – May 18

Save the date for the 2022 National Nurses Month Webinar on May 18. Each year, the ANA Enterprise provides educational programming at no cost as a part of Nurses Month activities. Watch for registration information.

All nurses, hospitals, and other stakeholders are encouraged to participate in Nurses Month to recognize nurses and educate the public about the profession's invaluable work. Be sure to share your Nurses Month activities on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter at #ANANursesMonth. With your help, this recognition event can raise the visibility of the nursing profession and express gratitude for nurses' enduring commitment and expertise.

Recognize certified nurses March 19

Each year, the ANA Enterprise recognizes Certified Nurses Day™ on March 19, which takes place on the birthday of Margretta "Gretta" Madden Styles, EdD, RN, FAAN, a renowned pioneer and expert in nurse credentialing. It's the perfect opportunity to invite all nurses to advance their career by choosing certification. The American Nurses Credentialing Center provides free downloadable tools and recognition ideas at certifiednursesday.org.

ANA supports efforts to restore Emergency Temporary Standard protections

The American Nurses Association (ANA) has consistently requested that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) use its authority to prevent COVID-19 infections in healthcare delivery. ANA again calls for the Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) to remain in place during the public health emergency, or until a permanent standard is implemented and enforced. The ETS sets clear and enforceable requirements for COVID-19 prevention in hospitals, home health, community clinics, and other healthcare delivery sites. The ETS expired on December 21, 2021, but the Omicron surge has intensified. Failing to extend the ETS exposes nurses and other healthcare personnel to the grave dangers in the workplace that required OSHA to act in June 2021.

ANA thanks Chairman Robert C. Scott (D-VA) and Chairwoman Alma S. Adams (D-NC) of the Committee on Education and Labor for their efforts to support nurses and all healthcare personnel who continue to

serve on the frontlines of the pandemic. Read their letter at <https://bit.ly/3sEBZBR>.

ANA supports a permanent standard that ensures workplace protection against all infectious agents to which nurses may be exposed when delivering healthcare, including evidence-based respiratory protections for all types of transmission. Until the permanent standard is implemented, ANA implores the Biden administration to reverse the decision to withdraw the ETS. Removal of protections during one of the worst waves of this pandemic has left nurses and other frontline personnel unnecessarily vulnerable when they have been and continue to be the backbone of the COVID-19 response since it began over 2 years ago.

ANA appreciates the administration's efforts to stand up for all healthcare workers in our communities during this pandemic and urgently requests the reimplementation of the Emergency Temporary Standard.

Enhancing nursing education about LGBTQ+ care

To: **Ethics Advisory Board**

From: **Concerned student**

Subject: **Knowledge about LGBTQ+ patients**

I'm a nursing student in the last semester of my Bachelor of Science in nursing program. Up to this point, my instructors haven't discussed how to care for LGBTQ+ patients. I know that these individuals have unique health needs, but I'm concerned that my nursing program hasn't adequately prepared me to care for them.

My sister is a member of the LGBTQ+ community and I'm troubled about the lack of understanding that she experiences when she seeks healthcare. She's told me about encounters with healthcare providers who were rude and unfeeling. Because of these incidents, she now hesitates to seek care. I'm worried that many of my classmates have no idea about the needs of LGBTQ+ patients. How can we learn to better care for this population?



From: **ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights**

Thank you for your question and your observation about the necessity to better understand the care needs of LGBTQ+ people. Public health experts have long recognized that people with nontraditional sexual and gender identities experience significant health disparities. The American Nurses Association (ANA) has been, and continues to be, a strong advocate for LGBTQ+ communities, starting in 1978 with its first resolution focusing on sexual orientation discrimination. Forty years later, ANA's Position Statement "Nursing Advocacy for LGBTQ+ Populations" describes the ethical responsibility that nurses must protect these patients from discriminatory practices. This statement is informed by the *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* (the *Code*) (nursingworld.org/coe-view-only).

For nurses to effectively advocate for and meet the healthcare needs of this diverse population, they must

be educated about LGBTQ+ people and learn how to deliver quality, equitable nursing care. Research exploring why LGBTQ+ content is limited or missing from nursing programs is weak, but studies have discovered that many teach 5 hours or less of content on this subject, and some don't offer any. Nursing faculty recognize the importance of teaching students about the healthcare needs of LGBTQ+ populations, but they cite the lack of time to include this essential topic in an already full undergraduate curriculum.

Research also shows that stigmatization, oppression, and discrimination negatively affect the social determinants of health for LGBTQ+ populations. The Healthy People 2030 objective related to LGBTQ+ populations is "to improve the health, safety, and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people." Nursing programs have a duty to prepare their graduates to meet the healthcare needs of LGBTQ+ people. This duty includes teaching students not only how to deliver patient care but also describes their

responsibility to address the health disparities and health inequities that impact LGBTQ+ people.

Finding solutions to including content on LGBTQ+ populations is challenging. Schools of nursing have an ethical responsibility to our society to teach their students how to deliver culturally appropriate care to these individuals and to instruct students on their ethical obligation to practice, as the *Code* states, "with compassion and respect for

the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person."

— Response by Betsy Swanson, DNP, MPH, APRN-BC, member of the ANA Ethics and Human Rights Advisory Board.

Reference

Eickhoff C. Identifying gaps in LGBTQ health education in baccalaureate undergraduate nursing programs. *J Nurs Educ.* 2021;60(10):552-8. doi:10.3928/01484834-20210729-01

Englund H, Basler J, Meine K. Nursing education and inclusion of LGBTQ topics: Making strides or falling short? *Nurse Educ.* 2020;45(4):182-4. doi:10.1097/NNE.0000000000000749.

Resource

Snowdon S. *Recommendations for Enhancing the Climate for LGBT Students and Employees in Health Professional Schools*. GLMA. 2013. bit.ly/3ucR4No

Do you have a question for the Ethics Inbox?
Submit at ethics@ana.org.

Vision and values

Kate Judge reflects on 10 years of growth at the American Nurses Foundation

In the 10 years since Kate Judge joined the American Nurses Foundation (the Foundation) as executive director, hundreds of thousands of nurses have been touched by Foundation programs and grants. During her tenure, the Foundation has undergone remarkable growth, raising nearly \$22 million in 2021 for 10 programs, up from \$200,000 in 2012 for one program. All these initiatives support the ANA Enterprise vision of a healthier world through the power of nursing.

This is just the beginning, according to Judge, who has her eyes on an even more ambitious goal. “We need a resource that helps all nurses—regardless of academic affiliation, specialty, or membership,” Judge said. She wants more of the overall giving in healthcare—\$42 billion in 2020—to be invested in nurses for the benefit of patients and the nursing profession.

Recently, Judge reflected on her tenure and her vision for the future of the Foundation.



Kate Judge

What are you most proud of?

With the support of our board of directors and dedication of our amazing staff members, the Foundation has made several important contributions to the profession. We launched a truly independent national Nurses on Boards campaign to increase nursing influence in board rooms across the country, created a national movement to focus on nurses’ health, and shed light on how nurses change lives in Carolyn Jones’ amazing film *Defining Hope*. If I had to pick one endeavor, it would be creating the Reimagining Nursing Initiative, which is uniting philanthropy and nursing to inspire structural change

in practice, education, and regulation. Nurses alone should not carry the burden of being resilient and making sense of practicing in a broken system. Mehul Mehta, MD, a Foundation board member and global health leader says, “the economy rests on nurses.” The pandemic has demonstrated this clearly.

What new things have you learned about nursing?

I accepted this position because it focused on my two passions—nursing and philanthropy. The Foundation poses a unique opportunity to scale up and spread change that nurses themselves drive. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated this in spades. Through the generosity of a grateful public, we were able to launch and fund programs that touched nurses throughout the United States and beyond. Part of this success was based on our model of bringing organizations together. Through this approach I saw the power and potential of nursing organizations coming together to work toward a common goal.



What challenges have you faced?

Nurses provide such incredible and under-appreciated care and expertise. Yet, sometimes they don’t think they can or should be the recipients of significant philanthropic support. I wish that when a grateful patient asks, “How can I help?” we can make it easier for them to provide meaningful support – from something immediate like a nutritious meal to something bigger and more lasting like a scholarship fund or professional growth.

What pulled you into nursing philanthropy?

My life changed when years before joining the Foundation I accepted a leadership position at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing in Philadelphia. With this role I found my life’s calling. To this day I thank deans Norma Lang, PhD, RN, FAAN, FRCN, and Claire Fagin, PhD, RN, FAAN, and the faculty, staff, and students at Penn for the incredible education they imparted to me, not only about nursing practice but also about nurses’ roles in health and healing for individual patients and our healthcare system. I firmly believe that when nursing has the financial resources it needs to innovate, lead, and thrive, the entire world will thrive.

Learn more about the Foundation at nursingworld.org/foundation.