



March 15, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Information from Healthcare Providers on Workforce Shortages – Palliative Care

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

On behalf of the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) and our nearly 10,000 members across the country, we write today to thank you for recognizing the important role healthcare providers play in our communities and for prioritizing healthcare workforce issues in the 118th Congress. As the committee considers input from providers and other stakeholders on the causes of the healthcare workforce shortage and potential legislative solutions, we respectfully request your consideration of the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA), bipartisan legislation previously introduced by Sens. Tammy Baldwin and Shelley Moore Capito. HPNA has long advocated for the passage of PCHETA, which would address many of the issues raised in the committee's recent hearing. The legislation would expand the palliative care and hospice workforce and provide interdisciplinary training opportunities in hospice and palliative care to improve care delivery for patients with serious illness.

HPNA is a national nonprofit organization of nursing professionals serving their communities in the specialty of hospice and palliative nursing across the life span. Established in 1986, HPNA is the only nursing organization of its kind. Our mission is to advance nursing expertise in hospice and palliative care through education, advocacy, leadership, and research, and our vision is for every person living with serious illness to receive equitable, comprehensive, and innovative hospice and palliative nursing care. HPNA's members are committed to providing the highest level of treatment and dignity to their patients and families, including at the end of life.

We believe that in order to improve access to high-quality hospice and palliative care for all patients, we must address gaps in the healthcare workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated an already problematic nursing workforce shortage across the United States. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates there will be more than 200,000 openings for registered nurses on average each year over the next decade, mostly resulting from a need to replace nurses who have changed occupations or exited the labor force. A study published in *Health Affairs* last year found that from 2020 to 2021, more than 100,000 nurses left the profession, the steepest drop in roughly four decades. Compounding the problem, more patients are seeking palliative care services as a result of the pandemic, according to a hospice and palliative workforce survey published in *Public Health Nursing* in October 2020. Our members do the best they can to fill in the gaps

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE NURSES ASSOCIATION

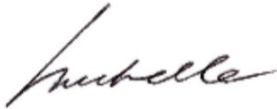
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caused by nursing workforce shortages, but they can only do so much, and patients and families are often the first to suffer the consequences.

PCHETA would address these issues through interdisciplinary education and training in hospice and palliative care, which, as noted by a witness during the committee's recent hearing, not only helps patients and their families, but also is beneficial to the mental health and well-being of the healthcare providers who serve them. We strongly urge you to consider this bipartisan legislation that would improve access to palliative care and ensure that healthcare providers have the training and support they need to deliver such care to patients with serious illness.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our input on ways to address the healthcare workforce shortage. We look forward to working with you on this issue; if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Sarah Potter, Health Policy Specialist, at (412) 282-3805, or by e-mail at sarahp@hpna.org.

Sincerely,



Michelle Webb, DNP, RN, CHPCA
2023 HPNF President



Virginia (Ginger) Marshall, MSN, ACNP-BC, ACHPN, FPCN
Chief Executive Officer, HPNA, HPCC, HPNF