



June 10th, 2020

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Governor Walz,

As a representative of over 22,000 nurses primarily in the state of Minnesota, the Minnesota Nurses Association encourages you and lawmakers to extend the peacetime state of emergency that has allowed and would continue to allow the emergency response of the administrative branch to monitor and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to plague us.

While much has changed for ordinary citizens over the last few months, nothing has changed for nurses and healthcare workers in our state. Nurses are still being forced to wear the same, single use mask for hours after they've been contaminated, use the same mask between COVID patients and non COVID patients, and rely on unproven sanitizing procedures (i.e. infrared cleaning and paper bags) to assure them and their patients that their equipment is safe. Nurses are still being disciplined or fired over the use of hospital scrubs. Nurses are still bringing the COVID virus home to their families and into the community because of a lack of precautions taken by health care facilities. As a result, healthcare workers are still one of the occupations most at risk for becoming infected, which at last check was still above 10 percent of all cases. Many of these workers are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, who work the essential and unprotected jobs in healthcare facilities from nurses' aides to environmental services.

Without the peacetime emergency, Governor Walz and the MDH will not be able to further address these issues, make recommendations on pre-crisis standards for healthcare workers or "turn back the dial" as necessary when there is a resurgence of cases and we run out of healthcare workers, equipment and hospital beds to care for COVID patients.

It may seem that the turning of the dial back signals a retreat of the virus, thus removing a need to extend the state of emergency. But for nurses, every turn of the dial, every step back towards normalcy means more risk for them. COVID-19 is not retreating. Our state and hospitals are still not ready for what the virus may throw at us. We are still in a state of emergency and we must continue to act and respond as such.

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AFL-CIO

Nurses share the fatigue and the fear that this pandemic has brought not just to Minnesotans' places of work but to our daily lives. But instead of ending the peacetime emergency, nurses believe the administration needs to do more to fight the virus. It's time to create uniform guidelines for hospitals. It's time to step up guidelines to protect patients and healthcare workers. It's time to increase the supply of PPE in our state stockpile. It's time to ensure that frontline workers are being kept safe. We feel that without the peacetime emergency, a delayed response will come much too late.

Governor, my hospital just held a vigil for our first frontline worker who died due to a lack of protection. I expect others to follow. I and the 22,000 nurses of the Minnesota Nurses Association call on you to stop this from happening. We call on the you and lawmakers to extend the peacetime state of emergency and enhance the protections of workers before many more are dead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary C. Turner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Mary C. Turner, RN
President
Minnesota Nurses Association