



February 24, 2021

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

Dear Members of the Workers Compensation Advisory Council,

With 22,000 members, the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) is the largest voice for professional nursing in the State of Minnesota. As leaders in labor and health care, we are a voice for nurses around the state.

Throughout this pandemic, nurses have dutifully shown up every day to care for Minnesotans. They have done so despite inadequate PPE, increased staffing levels, and multiple surges that required an all-hands-on-deck approach to care for patients.

Over the past year, many nurses have contracted COVID-19 while caring for our loved ones. Especially early in the pandemic, presumptive eligibility was a helpful tool as nurses had to quarantine and recover from COVID-19. It provided financial security as nurses put their health and safety on the line to care for Minnesotans.

MNA believes it is critical that presumptive eligibility is extended to provide stability to workers on the frontlines of this pandemic.

However, we would be remiss if we did not also acknowledge the difficulty many nurses have faced in accessing this benefit. The pandemic moved in ways many of us did not anticipate as the original language of this law was drafted. Especially as we see new variants of COVID-19 that are more contagious, we urge lawmakers and members of the Workers Compensation Advisory Council to reevaluate the eligibility language for health care workers.

Explicitly tying eligibility to direct COVID-19 patient care or ancillary work in COVID-19 patient units does not account for the various ways that nurses and other health care workers are exposed to the virus through their employment. In January, MNA's president, Mary Turner, shared with the Council the various ways in which nurses have been put at risk. Unlike many other workplace injuries, COVID-19 is difficult to track, quietly running rampant throughout facilities. Despite efforts to keep themselves, their colleagues, and their patients safe, hospital conditions and the veracity of the virus has made it nearly impossible to isolate the spread in health care settings.

Nurses across the state urge you to extend this critical program. Additionally, MNA would welcome the opportunity to work with bill authors and the council to close current loopholes in the law. Not only does presumptive eligibility provide financial protections for nurses, it also ensures that nurses who have contracted the virus are able to quarantine safely and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

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