



March 26, 2021

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

My name is Mary C. Turner. I'm an ICU nurse at North Memorial hospital in Robbinsdale, and I'm also the elected president of the Minnesota Nurses Association. I'm proud to represent more than 22,000 Registered Nurses across Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and North Dakota. In Minnesota, we are 80 percent of all the bedside hospital nurses in the state.

Over the past year, nurses have stepped up, answered the call of duty, and cared for Minnesotans during this devastating pandemic. We've risked our physical health and as we've been hearing for months now, our financial security. We nurses know that everyone is sacrificing. We know that we on the frontlines are more likely to be exposed to this viscous virus.

So when the federal government began enacting a series of policies to ensure Americans had access to emergency COVID leave to care for themselves, their loved ones, and their children, it was not only devastating but confusing as to why so many frontline, essential workers were left behind.

Through this pandemic, we expected to be at risk. What we didn't expect was that nurses and other essential workers would lose our hard-earned pay and benefits through no fault of our own.

Nurses and other essential workers are losing pay to care for Minnesotans in this pandemic.

Nurses have lost pay when they are exposed to a COVID-positive patient and cannot prove it happened at work. They lose pay when they have had to wait for test results. Nurses lose pay when care for a COVID-positive person at home, include their children.

And nurses lose pay when they cannot access daycare for their kids, including when day cares have closed due to positive cases.

Nurses who work for agencies were encouraged to see the state provide emergency COVID leave to care for themselves, their loved ones, and their children. However, for nurses working in some of the most intense settings in Minnesota, they faced their leave being denied. Our state nurses do invaluable work caring for highly acute patients in demanding conditions. We have to make sure that they too are able to take the necessary time when impacted by COVID.

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AFL-CIO

Nurses didn't become nurses for the gratitude. We don't expect thanks. We don't like being called "heroes" or "angels." We just don't want to lose our lives or our livelihoods because we are on the frontlines. No worker does. We have families too, and we're asking for them and for all essential workers: make this right.

Let's make sure workers who've lost so much during this pandemic are made whole. Please pass House File 41 - the Essential Workers Emergency Leave Act.

