



March 9, 2021

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

Representative Ecklund

Members of the House Labor, Industry, Veterans, and Military Affairs
Finance and Policy

Minnesota State Office Building

100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Ecklund and Members of the House Labor, Industry, Veterans, and
Military Affairs Finance and Policy,

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 everyday 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. We urge you to support
HF 1203.

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 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. 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

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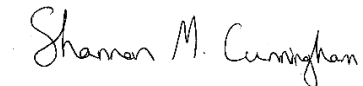
AFL-CIO

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 the bill author 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.

Vote yes on HF 1203.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon M. Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shannon M. Cunningham
Direction of Community and Government Relations
Minnesota Nurses Association

