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## **POSITION STATEMENT**

### **Imperative for a Safe and Healthy Workplace for Nurses**

The Florida Nurses Association, through its mission of promoting a safe and healthy workplace for nurses, affirms the right of every nurse to practice in a workplace environment that provides the support and equipment necessary to ensure that they are able to deliver high quality, evidence-based nursing care. It is the position of the Florida Nurses Association that all healthcare workers providing direct care for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients should be provided the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to safely care for these patients, including PPE that meets National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) standards.

Recommendations for PPE should be evidence-based and not downgraded based on supply chain deficits. There has been significant debate regarding the "Crisis Guidelines" published by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). These guidelines were published as options for healthcare workers without further recourse. These guidelines for PPE are not acceptable as a routine policy for healthcare workers in any setting. The FNA supports the recent announcement by The Joint Commission (TJC), which states that there is no TJC standard nor a regulatory requirement that prohibits staff from using PPE brought from home. TJC relayed that while the benefit to nurses and other health care workers obtaining and using self-supplied PPE remains uncertain, the balance of the evidence suggests that it does.

Furthermore, FNA strongly cautions against the use of homemade or cloth masks by healthcare workers. Makeshift PPE, such as bandanas, scarves, and cloth masks are insufficient as PPE as there is currently no evidence that they provide any protection to the healthcare worker. In addition, there is the possibility of increased risk from handmade masks due to poor fit and the need for frequent adjustments.

Only as a last resort, after all options for obtaining appropriate respiratory protection have been exhausted--including working with manufacturers, state and local health departments, other local health care providers, and community resources--should homemade masks be used, in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared 2020 to be the "Year of the Nurse & Midwife" to honor the impact nursing has had on human history. This commitment to the well-being of others is more evident than ever. In this time of considerable uncertainty and despite significant personal risk, nurses remain at the forefront of caring for the sick and dying. We must reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that those we send to care for these sick patients are adequately protected from becoming patients themselves.