POLICY WORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We have been in contact with legislative leaders of both parties, State agencies, and stakeholders to discuss strategies to assure enough nurses, both RNs and APRNs are available to meet the growing need of frontline care providers. The following issues have been discussed. Subsequent action taken by Governor Pritzker is in italics.

1. Extend nurse license renewal beyond May 30, 2020. **We are extending the deadline for license renewal from May 30, 2020, to September 30, 2020.** DPR has informed us that CE will be expected to be completed by the September date.
2. NCSBN testing sites have been closed, so those graduate nurses planning to take the NCLEX are currently unable to do so. We suggested issuing a ‘6-month temporary license’, as DPR used to do. DPR is very aware of this issue and are currently trying to establish testing sites and will do everything possible to expedite licensure.
3. Allow for reciprocity of licensure across state lines. Our comment: had the Nurse Licensure Compact passed; there would have been no need to establish this strategy!! For healthcare workers living at our borders, who may be practicing in cities outside of Illinois. We’re going to make it easier for you to also practice here.
   - Per DPR: The form is available on their website that asks for the name and licensure number of anyone desiring to practice from another state. They only want to know who is practicing in Illinois, no additional license needed. This Executive Order applies to all healthcare providers.
4. Find a way to utilize retired nurses to provide frontline care. **I’m asking all former physicians, nurses physician’s assistants, nurse practitioners, and respiratory care therapists who have recently left the field, whether for retirement or a new profession, to come back and join the fight against COVID 19. We need your help now.**
   - Per DPR: No fees. No required CEs. It is limited to those who have not practiced for five years or less.
   - On DPR website is a form to complete, and they will expedite a license that is good for six months. And, if necessary, will expand the time frame.
5. Waive all barriers for APRN practice, establishing full practice authority for all. Per DPR, the agencies and Governor’s office are discussing this potential, but are waiting until DPH informs them of need, as those working in hospitals can be granted flexibility in this time of crisis.
6. Find a way to utilize senior student nurses. We suggested those RN students in the final six months of education be granted a temporary license, such as RN Student Intern. Require they practice under the supervision of an RN and only in hospitals and LTC. This would be a volunteer only. Since these students are within weeks of graduating and do not have all the clinical hours necessary to graduate (and have no clinical time during the pandemic), faculty could grant those hours of ‘practicing’ to meet the clinical hours requirement. Providing this opportunity would not only help with frontline care now but help with reducing interruptions to the pipeline. The Governor’s agencies are discussing this and other possibilities.
7. Discussions will continue to take place regarding these, and other issues as needed. Some in leadership are brainstorming how best to deliver the safest care. One such topic is to increase access to home births, so mothers and newborns will not risk exposure to the virus in a hospital. We will be included in this discussion and will report when or if anything is
determined. And, we thank Governor Pritzker for his leadership and decision making regarding the health of people in Illinois.

Supply shortages. We have partnered with the State and stakeholders as they try to increase supplies of needed safety equipment.

1. In the Governor’s Executive Order on Friday, he authorized manufacturers to remain open if they were producing safety equipment for healthcare workers. ANA-Illinois, ISAPN, and IANA all signed on to the letter urging this, as well as IHA and ISMS. With the Executive Order, the letter was not needed.

2. ANA-Illinois President, Dr. Liz Aquino, initiated a donation plan in both Illinois and at the federal level. She asked, “In response to the hospital shortages of protective equipment due to COVID-19, I am encouraging all nursing programs to donate unused simulation and skills lab PPE materials (gloves, gowns, masks, hand sanitizer, etc.).” This can be done by contacting local hospitals.

3. **FROM DPR:** DPR is looking for information about healthcare providers/facilities that may have PPE available and not in use. We thank you for your collaboration and partnership as we all do our best to protect the State of Illinois and its citizens. Below is a list of equipment of specific interest:
   - N95 masks
   - surgical masks
   - surgical gloves
   - goggles
   - face shields
   - gowns
   - PAPRs (powered air purifying respirators)
   - respirators
   - Provide your responses to Scott Gauvin, Manager of Strategic Operations and Preparedness, IEMA scott.gauvin@illinois.gov

4. **FROM IHA:** On behalf of more than 200 hospitals and health systems across Illinois, we ask you to donate N95s to your local hospitals. This donation can be facilitated by contacting Patrick Sonin at IHA at psonin@team-iha.org or 630-276-5458.

We will keep you informed as things change. We will continue to work with decision-makers, just in a slightly different way. No one knows when the General Assembly will return to Springfield. There are two major issues they must pass this Spring. The Hospital Assessment Tax must be approved (brings more money into the State and the Illinois budget for 2021 by May 31, 2020.