



January 5, 2021

Representative Joe Sanfelippo, Chair and Members of the Assembly Health Committee
Room 314 North
State Capitol
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 537081-4-2021

RE: Wisconsin Nurses Association Submitted Written Testimony on AB 1 - The COVID-19 pandemic relief package.

Dear Chairperson Sanfelippo and Members of the Assembly Health Committee,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Nurses Association (WNA) I want to thank you for holding a public hearing on AB 1. The WNA is the organization representing the interests of Wisconsin's 90,000 registered nurses. WNA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting a safe and ethical work environment, bolstering the health and wellness of nurses, and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. WNA is at the forefront of improving the quality of health care for all. We have been actively engaged in supporting the education, practice, safety, and health of Wisconsin's nurses throughout this COVID-19 public health emergency.

WNA's Public Policy Council members have reviewed the language in AB 1 submitted by Speaker Vos. WNA would like to share our nursing perspective on the benefits of AB 1 and our two concerns. WNA supports the following concepts found in AB 1:

1. Creation of statutes that allow for the issuance of temporary licenses for out of state nurses and other members of the health care team. This supports patient access to quality care which is needed for acute, long-term, home health and public health services. Wisconsin needs nurses to administer the vaccinations and without assistance from out of state nurses Wisconsin will not achieve its immunization goals. The current emergency orders have increased the nursing workforce by 94. Registered Nurses = 68, Licensed Practical Nurses = 5, Nurse Midwife = 1, and Advanced Practice Nurse Prescribers = 21. (Source: DSPS, 12/2/2020.
<https://dsps.wi.gov/Documents/BoardCouncils/NUR/20201210NUR%20Additional%20Materials.pdf>

2. Expand the type of health care providers and settings where individuals can be vaccinated for COVID-19 including dentists and pharmacist-related personnel and student is very innovative.
3. Allowing out-of-state Nurse Anesthetists practicing in Wisconsin to be covered under the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund will support those areas in Wisconsin where there is a lack of anesthesia providers.
4. Insurance coverage of COVID -19 vaccination and testing without a copay will improve access, cost and quality of the healthcare related issues to this highly communicable disease.
5. Coverage of vaccine administration for Wisconsin's older adults is very important to maintaining the health of this vulnerable population.

WNA would like to share our two concerns regarding the current language in AB 1.

1. Continue to utilize the current statute that allow for vaccination exemption which are, medical, religious or personal conviction. WNA supports of the concepts and principles related to immunizing as many individuals as possible so as to promoting a healthy Wisconsin workforce. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a yo-yo effect for Wisconsin businesses and the individuals they hire. Employers continue to experience workforce shortages due to employees contracting or being exposed to COVID. This is very evident when we see hospital capacity reduced because of nurses contracting and being exposed to COVID.
2. Support the role of Wisconsin's Local Public Health Officers by recognizing their expertise regarding management of public health emergencies. The Public Health Officer should be viewed as a team member of the local boards and is acting in the best interest of the population.

I would like to thank you Chairperson Sanfelippo for holding this public hearing. WNA would like to thank Speaker Vos for sponsoring this legislation as it supports access to care and health services for Wisconsinites.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely

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