



## AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

### "Enhancing Public Health: Legislation to Protect Children and Families"

#### U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health

October 20, 2021

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chairwoman Eshoo, and Ranking Member Guthrie:

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is pleased to support advancement of H.R. 1956, the *Increasing Access to Quality Cardiac Rehabilitation Care Act of 2021*, as part of today's House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health's important legislative hearing. This bipartisan, bicameral legislation, led by Representatives Lisa Blunt Rochester and Adrian Smith, would expand patient access to critical cardiovascular and pulmonary rehabilitation services (CR/PR) at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has made these services critical to more patients than ever before.

Nineteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we have learned that most people who contract COVID-19 recover completely within a few weeks. However, some people continue to experience long-term symptoms even after they have recovered<sup>1</sup>. Patients who have had diagnostic tests performed months after recovering from COVID-19 reveal they have had damage to their heart, even in cases where patients only had mild symptoms of the disease. Other patients learn they have scar tissue in their lungs, which can cause breathing problems for an undetermined amount of time. These are serious long-term effects which will require more access to CR/PR services for patients.

Because of COVID-19, the United States has thus far suffered more than 725,000 deaths. The other story, however, is that we have had more than 45 million survivors of COVID-19, and we do not know the long-term outcomes for many of these patients. We do know that more patients will put a strain on the already over-burdened health care system and that ensuring providers are practicing to the top of their education and clinical training will make the system more efficient. As such, it is critical that Congress pass the *Increasing Access to Quality Cardiac Rehabilitation Act* to ensure patients have access to these CR/PR services. This legislation would authorize nurse practitioners (NPs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), and physician assistants (PAs) to order and supervise CR/PR starting in 2022 and expedites access to CR/PR Medicare programs that are presently not scheduled to go into effect until 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-long-term-effects/art-20490351>

NPs, CNSs, and PAs are highly competent providers who are qualified to order and supervise CR/PR services. Unfortunately, the Medicare law is outdated and prevents these providers from supervising and ordering CR/PR services. These providers are often able to perform these services under state law, serve as primary care providers, and are on the front line in critical care settings. The current Medicare restrictions resulted in fewer Medicare beneficiaries being able to access CR/PR services even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of access will only be exacerbated by the increase in COVID-19 patients who may need these services.

ANA is the premier organization representing the interests of the nation's 4.3 million registered nurses, through its state and constituent member associations, organizational affiliates, and individual members. ANA members also include the four advanced practice registered nurse roles (APRNs): Nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse-midwives and certified registered nurse anesthetists. ANA is dedicated to partnering with health care consumers to improve practices, policies, delivery models, outcomes, and access across the health care continuum.

If you have questions, please contact Sam Hewitt, Senior Associate Director of Policy and Government Affairs, at (352) 219-6584 or [samuel.hewitt@ana.org](mailto:samuel.hewitt@ana.org).



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