



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Underwood:

I am writing to provide Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) support for your legislation, H.R. 5575, the Department of Veterans Affairs Nurse and Physician Assistant Retention and Income Security Enhancement Act ("RAISE Act"). The bill is a top priority for VA and our indefatigable workforce who have been on the frontlines at the helm of the pandemic for over 2 years.

VA supports the legislation's intent to amend the pay limitations for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), Physician Assistants (PAs) and Registered Nurses (RNs). VA employs APRNs in four roles: Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) and Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM). Due to the current pay limitation, VA is no longer competitive in very high salary labor markets.

It is estimated that our nursing workforce is made up of nearly 77,000 employees—nearly one-third of VHA's total workforce. Further, CNPs and PAs make up 30% and 18.5% of the current VHA primary care workforce, respectively, with over 6,500 CNPs and 2,500 PAs. Modification of the pay limitation and the ability to adjust the rate of pay will give VA more flexibility to provide competitive salaries for these providers, who are critical to achieving access standards for Veteran health care.

We stand ready to work with you and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs as this legislation advances and without diminishing this much-needed progress for our workforce, especially when it comes to patient and worker safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Patricia L. Ross".

Patricia L. Ross
Assistant Secretary for Congressional
and Legislative Affairs