

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2020

Ms. Cathleen Bennett
President and CEO
New Jersey Hospital Association
760 Alexander Road
Princeton, NJ 08543-0001

Dear Ms. Bennet:

We thank the New Jersey Hospital Association (NJHA) and its member hospitals for the work you all continue to do on the frontlines to keep New Jersey safe. We are facing an unprecedented crisis, and we understand the difficulties hospitals face in acquiring the resources and workforce needed to address this pandemic.

As Congress has worked to address COVID-19, we have made it a priority to ensure that our health care workers have the supplies they need, like personal protective equipment (PPE), to keep themselves, their families, their patients, and their communities healthy. This includes working to make sure hospitals and other facilities are getting the funding they require and calling on the Administration to ensure that entities in states that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, such as New Jersey, receive their fair share of funding from the federal government. We have also consistently called on the Administration to release and send more supplies to New Jersey from the Strategic National Stockpile. We will continue to fight to send resources to New Jersey, including PPE, other medical supplies, and funding.

We write today to express our concerns regarding recent reports of nurses and other health care workers in New Jersey hospitals being disciplined for various reasons related to PPE. Like all of us, healthcare workers are fearful right now of contracting and spreading COVID-19, and they deserve to have access to every tool possible to safeguard their own wellbeing. We understand hospitals have a vested interest in closely tracking medical supplies entering the facility to protect both healthcare workers and patients, but we are concerned about the impact that disciplinary actions, such as the ones that have occurred at New Jersey hospitals, may have on our healthcare workforce during this critical time. As you know better than us, retaining our health care workforce at a time when our health care delivery system is under extreme duress by the overwhelming number of patients affected with COVID-19 is of great importance.

We understand that accomplishing this goal, while also protecting the safety and wellbeing of healthcare workers, may require additional flexibility to tailor policies for a rapidly-evolving crisis. Therefore, to ensure that disciplinary actions do not unnecessarily add to our state's existing nursing and medical staff deficit, we encourage you to continue to work with organizations that represent healthcare workers, including labor unions, to recommend best practices or guidelines to your member hospitals on how to address personnel issues related to PPE.

Thank you again for the incredible work you do for New Jersey, and we look forward to continuing to work with NJHA and its member hospitals to keep our state safe.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator