



The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs

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July 10, 2023

Dr. Mandy Cohen, MD, MPH, Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Cohen:

I wish to offer my sincere congratulations on your new appointment as the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). You are filling an essential role at an agency that has a wide-ranging impact on the nation's health. National Nurses United (NNU), representing nearly 225,000 members nationwide, is the largest labor union and professional association for registered nurses (RNs) in the United States. As RNs, our members recognize the role that CDC's guidance plays in shaping essential policy, including those concerning health care infection control, patient safety, and chronic and infectious disease prevention.

We are eager to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss a variety of issues related to the nursing workforce and patient care. Chief among them is our deep concern about proposals to weaken the CDC's guidance for infection control in health care settings. Recently, the CDC's Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) initiated a process to update health care infection control guidance relied on extensively by the agency. Both the available content of these updates and the process to develop them are troubling. As RNs, our members are patient advocates who have developed expertise on the infection control and occupational protection measures necessary to ensure the safe delivery of patient care. Their concerns for their safety and the safety of their patients have not been considered sufficiently by HICPAC/CDC.

Your prompt attention to this matter is crucial. It was announced at the June 2023 HICPAC meeting that final language would be presented to the committee for a vote at the August 2023 meeting. This represents a problematic acceleration of the timeline that was presented by HICPAC/CDC staff earlier in the year.<sup>1</sup> HICPAC/CDC Workgroup presentations indicate an effort to weaken existing protections for health care workers caring for patients with infectious diseases. The scientific research base and the loss of RN lives during the pandemic demonstrate that stronger infection control measures are needed. The CDC and HICPAC must hear from and incorporate input from our members, who are direct care RNs, before finalizing these updates, but they have no clear mechanism to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Michael Bell provided an update on HICPAC's process to update the 2007 *Isolation Precautions* guidance to a March 14, 2023, meeting of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Healthcare Sector Council that the process would be complete within nine to 12 months, which would be the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024.

I am attaching background and analysis of the situation and look forward to a meeting with you to discuss this further. Given the seriousness of the situation and the significant impact such updates will have on our membership, we stand ready and willing to meet with you in person at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Castillo, RN

Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Honorable Julie A. Su, Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Labor

The Honorable Douglas L. Parker, Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health  
U.S. Department of Labor

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Hickenlooper, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

U.S. Senate

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Health Care  
Finance Committee  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies,  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Health  
Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Anna Eshoo, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy & Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Alma Adams, Ranking Member  
Workforce Protections Subcommittee  
Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dr. Jay C. Butler  
Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Daniel Jernigan, Director  
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Alexander J. Kallen, Designated Federal Officer  
Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee  
Prevention and Response Branch, Chief  
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases  
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Dr. Denise Cardo, Director  
Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion

Dr. Michael Bell, Deputy Director  
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Dr. John Howard, Director  
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Dr. Maryann D'Alessandro, Director  
National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory