



*The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs*

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March 30, 2022

Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH, Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30329

RE: Second Covid-19 Vaccine Booster for Health Care Workers

Dear Dr. Walensky:

I want to thank you for making your team available to meet with me and our team on Monday of this week to discuss several areas of concern. National Nurses United very much appreciates CDC having an open door and engaging in regular discussions with us as we collectively battle the ongoing pandemic. One of the issues we discussed is our recommendation that CDC urgently approve a second Covid-19 vaccine booster for nurses and other health care workers. Yesterday the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a second booster dose for “either the Pfizer-BioNTech or the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for older people and certain immunocompromised individuals,”<sup>1</sup> and the CDC thereafter updated its recommendations for the same groups.<sup>2</sup> Unmentioned in either the FDA or the CDC’s recommendations, however, were frontline health care workers.

Frontline nurses and other health care workers were among the first to receive a booster dose in early October. Last September, nurses across the country were beyond grateful and relieved for your courage to prioritize our health and safety as we battled the highly contagious and deadly SARS-CoV-2 Delta (B.1.617.2) surge when you included “those in high risk occupational and institutional settings,” including health care workers, in the CDC’s recommendations on

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Authorizes Second Booster Dose of Two COVID-19 Vaccines for Older and Immunocompromised Individuals,” March 29, 2022, <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-authorizes-second-booster-dose-two-covid-19-vaccines-older-and>.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “CDC Recommends Additional Boosters for Certain Individuals,” March 29, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/s0328-covid-19-boosters.html>.

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who should first receive the first booster.<sup>3</sup> However, we are dismayed that health care workers were not included in yesterday's recommendations and strongly urge you to rectify that matter immediately.

Data from the U.K. Health Security Agency found significant waning of immunity against symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant at 15+ weeks after the booster dose.<sup>4</sup> Stowe et al., found that booster vaccine effectiveness against Omicron hospitalization declined from 91 percent to 67 percent after 105 days among 18–64-year-old.<sup>5</sup> A Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report found that booster protection against Covid-associated emergency department and urgent care visits and hospitalizations among adults declined within four months during Omicron predominance.<sup>6</sup>

With the highly transmissible and immune evasive Omicron sub-lineage, BA.2,<sup>7,8,9</sup> now dominant in the United States,<sup>10</sup> this puts nurses and other health care workers susceptible to

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<sup>3</sup> "National Nurses United applauds CDC director's approval of Covid boosters for health care workers," September 24, 2021, [National Nurses United applauds CDC director's approval of Covid boosters for health care workers | National Nurses United; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "CDC Statement on ACIP Booster Recommendations,"](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0924-booster-recommendations.html) September 24, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0924-booster-recommendations.html>.

<sup>4</sup> U.K. Health Security Agency, "COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report Week 11," March 17, 2022, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1061532/Vaccine\\_surveillance\\_report\\_-\\_week\\_11.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1061532/Vaccine_surveillance_report_-_week_11.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Stowe et al., "Effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against Omicron and Delta hospitalisation: test negative case-control study," March 24, 2022, available at [COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report - week 12 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1061532/Vaccine_surveillance_report_-_week_12.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ferdinands et al., "Waning 2-Dose and 3-Dose Effectiveness of mRNA Vaccines Against COVID-19-Associated Emergency Department and Urgent Care Encounters and Hospitalizations Among Adults During Periods of Delta and Omicron Variant Predominance — VISION Network, 10 States, August 2021–January 2022," MMWR Early Release, February 11, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7107e2.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> U.K. Health Security Agency, "SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation in England Technical briefing 38," March 11, 2022, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1060337/Technical-Briefing-38-11March2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1060337/Technical-Briefing-38-11March2022.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Stegger et al., "Occurrence and significance of Omicron BA.1 infection followed by BA.2 reinfection," medRxiv, February 22, 2022, <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.02.19.22271112v1>.

<sup>9</sup> Plesner et al., "Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron VOC subvariants BA.1 and BA.2: Evidence from Danish Households," medRxiv, January 30, 2022, <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.01.28.22270044v1>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "COVID Data Tracker, Variant Proportions," March 29, 2022, available at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>.

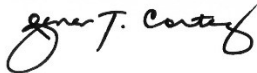
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infection and severe disease. While Covid-19 vaccines still protect against any of the Omicron sub-lineages, health care workers who have worked on the frontlines of the pandemic for over two years are several months out from their initial booster dose. This danger is further magnified by the failure of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration to continue enforcing its Emergency Temporary Standard for health care workers, leaving front line care givers especially vulnerable at this time.

We urge you to afford frontline health care workers with the necessary protection from Covid-19 so that we can continue to provide safe patient care by amending yesterday's recommendation to include health care workers in the group of people to be prioritized to receive a second booster shot.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zenei Triunfo-Cortez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, RN  
President

cc: The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States  
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Ms. Carrie Pugh, Director of External Affairs, Intergovernmental and External Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Ms. Liz Shuler, President, AFL-CIO