

A Call to Action: Support HR 4601,
to create an Office of the National Nurse for America

On February 4, Representative Earl Blumenauer [D-OR] introduced into the US House of Representatives HR 4601, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish the Office of the National Nurse.

Nurses across the U.S. are needed to support this bill and encourage its passage, by asking their own congressional representatives to co-sponsor the bill. It is a very simple thing to do - **just go to www.nationalnurse.org, and click on Take Action.** This link will guide you through the process of finding your representative, and supply sample letters and phone messages. Remember, you are a constituent, and your elected officials WORK FOR YOU.

If you are unfamiliar with the proposal to establish an Office of the National Nurse, here are the answers to some questions you might have.

Who Will Be the National Nurse?

Congress will designate the existing Chief Nurse Officer (CNO) of the US Public Health Service (USPHS), who also serves as the Assistant Surgeon General, to be elevated to become a full time position within the Office of the Surgeon General and be officially titled the National Nurse for prevention. The goal is to elevate and enhance the Office of the PHS Chief Nurse to bring more visibility to the critical role nursing occupies in promoting, protecting, and advancing the nation's health.

What Will the Office of the National Nurse Do?

The Office of the National Nurse will perform those responsibilities currently being executed by the CNO and will particularly have these more prominent roles:

Support the Surgeon General's Focus on Prevention

- Assist in the initiation of a nationwide cultural shift to prevention.
- Bolster efforts to focus the public on healthy living.
- Intensify roles for nurses, including students and retirees, in community health promotion.
- Provide greater support to the Surgeon General in calling for improvements in health literacy and reduction in health disparities.

Develop Nurses as Community Health Advocates

- Encourage all nurses to spread prevention messages in their communities.
- Encourage participation of nurses in **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)** units.
- Provide leadership to network with existing volunteer health promotion efforts.
- Strengthen linkages with providers, nursing programs, and public health leadership.

Promote Professional Nursing

- Serve as a visible national spokesperson for professional nursing.
- Increase public awareness of nursing roles and contributions.
- Enhance nursing recruitment and education throughout all communities.
- Support and justify additional funding for nursing education, research and service.

Why is an Office of the National Nurse Needed?

To slow the growing epidemics of preventable diseases:

- Current estimates predict a 42% increase in the 7 chronic diseases.
- Risk of type II diabetes is high for more than 41 million Americans.
- \$1.3 TRILLION annual economic impact of the most common chronic diseases.
- The U.S. ranks 19th in preventable deaths.

Promote health awareness, increase health literacy, and reduce health disparities:

- Only 31% of Americans can name all 5 heart attack warning signs.
- Ninety million Americans have poor health literacy resulting in higher mortality.
- Death rates from stroke are 40% higher in African American adults compared to Caucasian adults.

To promote health careers and increased resources:

- Severe nursing shortages are projected to continue.
- Public health workforce needs are critical.
- Public health infrastructure must be strengthened.

To enhance visibility and public recognition of nursing:

- Raise awareness of diverse careers in nursing.
- Demonstrate nursing leadership and autonomy.
- Encourage youth to explore careers in nursing and healthcare.