



National Black Nurses Association, Inc.
8630 Fenton Street, Suite 910, Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: (301) 589-3200 • Fax: (301) 589-3223



Dr. Martha A. Dawson
President

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NBNA Strongly Supports a Healthy and Safe Work Environment for Nurses Who are on the Frontline Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

Silver Spring, Maryland - —The National Black Nurses Association is distressed by the growing reports of nurses who are trying to ensure that they and all frontline health workers are protected while caring for patients in this pandemic. Martha A. Dawson, DNP, RN, FACHE, President, National Black Nurses Association, said: “It is unacceptable to see pictures of nurses covered with black trash bags ministering care to patients. It is irresponsible to tell nurses, after a 12-hours shift, to place their cloth or personal protective equipment (PPE) masks in paper or plastic bags and use these items on their next shift. It is shocking to learn that nurses who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 are told that they must keep working and risk infecting more patients and their colleagues. It is untenable that nurses are threatened with termination if they seek protections to keep them and their patients safe. One nurse stated that when her sick colleague was finally allowed to go to the ER, she was diagnosed and admitted with COVID-19. These are the painful stories that we have heard of from frontline nurses.”

The growing outbreaks of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, have already begun to overwhelm our country’s hospital emergency departments, inpatient units and clinics. There is a severe shortage of PPE for frontline health care workers, nurses, emergency physicians and others. This lack of hospital-supplied PPEs, like cloth masks, N95 masks and face shields, has led to nurses buying their own or using borrowed or donated equipment. “In many cases, the nurses have become creative in making their own protective gear that only serves as barriers and not real protection”, stated Dr. Dawson.

Nurses are doing their best to protect themselves, their colleagues, their families and their communities during this pandemic. It is unbelievable that our Nation’s most trusted workers, nurses, would be placed in situations that are unsafe for them and their patients. We need every nurse we have to be healthy and available to combat this pandemic. “How our health care institutions and governments take care of our frontline personnel will have a long, profound effect on the next generation of health care workers. If we fail to get this right, schools of nursing and schools of medicine may suffer from a drop in enrollment. Health care systems may experience high turnover, low nurse recruitment and early retirement. If the US is projecting 100,000 deaths, we need all health care workers and it is our duty to protect and help them feel safe”, said Dr. Dawson.”



Dr. (Hon) Millicent Gorham
Executive Director

NBNA will continue to fight for its members. We will continue to advocate that nurses be given the appropriate protective equipment. Health care institutions must make every effort to work with federal state, and local governments to secure the appropriate PPEs and all other equipment that nurses need to help them provide the best care for their patients. If our government and others have equipment and supplies, we need to move these to the frontline worker now, not later.

Each day thousands of emergency room, ICU, medical/surgical, OR and other nurses work under unthinkable conditions as they admirably battle this public health crisis of our lifetime. We must do everything we can to protect those on the frontline. We must do everything we can to provide the appropriate resources, mental health support and practice the simple art of human caring for those on the frontline of this Pandemic War Zone.