



**California
Nurses
Association**



**National
Nurses
United**

A Voice for Nurses. A Vision for Health Care.

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March 11, 2020

Peter Beilenson, Director
Sacramento County
Department of Health Services
7001-A East Parkway
Sacramento, CA 95823

RE: The Move from Containment to Mitigation and Elimination of 14-Day Quarantine Period Announced in “New Mitigation Efforts: COVID-19” Released to the Media on March 9, 2020

Dear Director Beilenson;

The California Nurses Association/National Nurses United (CNA/NNU), representing more than 100,000 registered nurses (RNs) who provide direct care services to patients in California facilities, is the largest union of RNs in California. As such, we are deeply concerned about “the shift from containment to mitigation” as stated in your March 9th announcement. It is crucial to public health that *both* are addressed. As WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, stated the very same day you made your announcement:

It’s not about containment or mitigation – which is a false dichotomy. It’s about both.

All countries must take a comprehensive blended strategy for controlling their epidemics and pushing this deadly virus back.

Countries that continue finding and testing cases and tracing their contacts not only protect their own people, they can also affect what happens in other countries and globally.¹

We strongly urge Sacramento County to continue to persevere in *both* containing and mitigating the effects of COVID-19.

CNA/NNU is concerned, in particular—for the health of RNs and other health care workers, first responders, patients, and the general public—that the 14-day quarantine period for those exposed

¹ “WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 9 March 2020.” Emphasis in original. <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---9-march-2020>, accessed March 11, 2020.

to a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been eliminated. Your March 9th announcement states: “ ... it is no longer necessary for someone who has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 to quarantine for 14 days. This applies to the general public, as well as health care workers and first responders.” It further states that only those who become symptomatic should stay in their homes. This is deeply disturbing given that research suggests that “a substantial proportion of secondary transmission may occur prior to illness onset.”² **We strongly urge Sacramento County to rescind the March 9th announcement eliminating the 14-day quarantine period.**

In every emerging infectious disease event, RNs and other health care workers are on the frontlines caring for the most vulnerable, high-risk patients. Many of these patients fit the profile of those at higher risk for COVID-19 complications identified in your announcement and on Sacramento County’s COVID-19 webpage: older adults beginning at age 60, with those over 80 being at highest risk, and “[p]eople with chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, heart disease, or lung diseases such as COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems are at high risk of complications.” Moreover, your COVID-19 webpage identifies “[t]hose with close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case” as having an increased risk of infection and includes “health care workers caring for confirmed COVID-19 cases” as one of the examples. Yet, despite the proximity of those with an increased risk of COVID-19 infection (health care workers) to those at higher risk of complications from the virus (many of their patients) you have called for an end to the 14-day quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19.

RNs provide patient care in a variety of settings, including clinics and hospitals, which are most likely to see patients who may have COVID-19. They stand ready and willing to provide the lifesaving care these patients need. However, RNs as well as other health care workers must have the highest level of protection to be able to do their jobs safely. Healthcare facilities must maintain protective infection control and prevention plans to prevent occupational exposure to staff and to stop the spread of this novel coronavirus to vulnerable patients and the public at large. Maintaining the 14-day quarantine is a crucial element to keeping everyone safe and healthy.

In closing, CNA reiterates our recommendation that Sacramento County continue its efforts to both contain *and* mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and to maintain the 14-day quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19.

² Nishiura, Hiroshi, Natalie M. Linton, and Andrei R. Akhmetzhanov. March 04, 2020. “Serial interval of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infections.” DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2020.02.060>, accessed March 10, 2020.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have questions regarding these matters or would like to arrange a meeting, please contact Saskia Kim at 916-491-3204 or skim@calnurses.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Roberson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Roberson, Director
Government Relations
California Nurses Association/National Nurses United

CC: Members, Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
Navdeep S. Gill, Sacramento County Executive
Hon. Dr. Richard Pan, Chair Senate Health Committee
Hon. Jim Wood, Chair Assembly Health Committee
Hon. Ken Cooley, Assemblymember District 08
Hon. Jim Cooper, Assemblymember District 09
Hon. Kevin McCarty, Assemblymember District 07
Hon. Darrell Steinberg, Mayor, City of Sacramento