

February 28, 2019

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Chair, Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Hearing on “Confronting a Growing Public Health Threat: Measles Outbreaks in the U.S.”

Dear Chairwoman DeGette and Ranking Member Guthrie,

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), we’d like to thank you for focusing your attention on the current measles outbreak in the United States. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.”¹ ANA strongly supports efforts to ensure individuals are immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases and appreciates the opportunity to weigh in on this important topic.

ANA is the premier organization representing the interests of the nation’s 4 million registered nurses (RNs), through its state and constituent member associations, organizational affiliates, and individual members. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting a safe and ethical work environment, bolstering the health and wellness of nurses, and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. RNs serve in multiple direct care, care coordination, and administrative leadership roles, across the full spectrum of health care settings. RNs provide and coordinate patient care, educate patients and the public about various health conditions including essential self-care, and provide advice and emotional support to patients and their family members. ANA members also include the four advanced practice registered nurse roles (APRNs): nurse practitioners (NPs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs).² ANA is dedicated to partnering with health care consumers to improve practices, policies, delivery models, outcomes, and access across the health care continuum.

The controversy over mandatory vaccination, which seems to pit the rights of the individual against the protection of the public, was highlighted with the 2014-2015 measles outbreak that affected both children and adults who were not vaccinated against the disease. Over a six-month period, five outbreaks and 173 confirmed cases of measles were reported to the CDC³. Again, less than four years later, another measles outbreak is affecting the country. Reasons for an individual’s decision to not

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/transmission.html>

² The Consensus Model for APRN Regulation defines four APRN roles: certified nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse-midwife and certified registered nurse anesthetist. In addition to defining the four roles, the Consensus Model describes the APRN regulatory model, identifies the titles to be used, defines specialty, describes the emergence of new roles and population foci, and presents strategies for implementation.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Measles cases and outbreaks. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>.

vaccinate vary and include concerns about the safety of vaccination, concerns about the vaccination schedule, objections to vaccination based on religious grounds, medical necessity, or philosophical beliefs, explained in part by the supposition that herd immunity will protect the unvaccinated from infection⁴.

Current evidence and research show that immunizations are essential to the primary prevention of disease from infancy through adulthood. The reduction and elimination of vaccine-preventable diseases has been one of the great public health achievements in the United States. Effective vaccination programs for both children and adults, according to current recommendations from CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), are for promoting and maintaining the health of the public.

Before development of the measles vaccine in 1963, a majority of children got measles by the age of 15. It is estimated 3 to 4 million people in the United States were infected each year. Among reported cases, an estimated 400 to 500 people died, 48,000 were hospitalized, and 1,000 contracted encephalitis as a side effect of measles.⁵ Vaccine-preventable diseases include measles, for which immunization is recommended. From 2000 – 2016, reported measles incidence decreased 87%, from 145 to 19 cases per million persons Annual estimated measles deaths decreased 84% (20.4 million deaths prevented)⁶.

ANA strongly supports immunizations to protect the public from highly communicable and deadly diseases such as measles, mumps, diphtheria, pertussis, and has supported mandatory vaccination policies for registered nurses and health care workers under certain circumstances. ANA agrees with CDC and ACIP recommendations that all individuals should be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases to protect the health of the public. ANA supports limited exemptions from immunization only for medical contraindications and religious beliefs.

Thank you for scheduling this important hearing. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Sam Hewitt, ANA's senior associate director of policy and government affairs, at samuel.hewitt@ana.org or (301) 628-5114.

Thank you,



Ingrida Lusia
Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs
American Nurses Association

⁴ LaVail, K., & Kennedy, A. (2012). The role of attitudes about vaccine safety, efficacy, and value in explaining parents' reported vaccination behavior. *Health Education and Behavior, 40*(5), 544-551.

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/history.html>

⁶ CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Oct 27, 2017 / Vol. 66 / No. 42.