



February 12, 2021

Denis R. McDonough  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), we congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff.

As you may know, nurses and nursing students are currently serving on the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19 by educating, tracing, testing, and vaccinating our communities. We at AACN have a vested interest in supporting this work, as our 840 member institutions are preparing over 560,000 nursing students to enter the workforce. Given the critical role nurses play in addressing public health emergencies and providing evidence-based care, we look forward to working with the Department of Veteran's Affairs to ensure that nurses are engaged in the national dialogue on protecting the nation's health and improving health care.

As the collective voice for academic nursing, AACN serves as the catalyst for excellence and innovation in nursing education, research, and practice, especially in rural and underserved communities. Our 2021-2022 Federal Policy Agenda reflects our core policy values of sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity. We believe these principles are essential for strengthening and advancing our nation's health.

Leaders within AACN have a rich history of working with the Department of Veterans Affairs. I currently serve as a member of your Special Medical Advisory Group, several of our member-school deans currently work with the National Academic Affiliations Council, and we participate with your Office of Academic Affiliations at every available opportunity. We hope to further this relationship as we work together to prepare a diverse, highly qualified, and community-focused nursing workforce.

Toward this effort, we can connect you with nursing leaders, researchers, and policy experts who offer critical insights as you take the helm of Veteran's Affairs. We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss how we can assist in your work. If we can be of any assistance, please contact AACN by reaching out to Dr. Colleen Leners, Director of Policy at [cleners@aacnnursing.org](mailto:cleners@aacnnursing.org), or Rachel Stevenson, Director of Government Affairs at [rstevenson@aacnursing.org](mailto:rstevenson@aacnursing.org).

Sincerely,

Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Board Chair

Deborah E. Trautman, PhD, RN, FAAN  
President and Chief Executive Officer

ADVANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NURSING