



**National
Nurses
United**

The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs

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February 13, 2023

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the nearly 225,000 nurses represented by National Nurses United, we write today to ask you to become an original cosponsor of the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which will be introduced soon by Representatives Bobby Scott and Brian Fitzpatrick. This bipartisan legislation would implement critical improvements to current labor law in order to protect the right for workers to organize a union and bargain collectively.

A union gives workers the ability to act together to advocate for safe working conditions, to improve their wages and benefits, and to protect their workplace rights through collective bargaining and concerted activity. The right to organize a union and bargain collectively is guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and enforced by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The right to form a union provides workers with the power necessary to address issues in their workplace and bargain collectively for improvements that benefit both recruitment and retention. For registered nurses, union advocacy and representation allow us to focus on what we do best: caring for our patients.

Across the country, nurses have been subject to intimidation and retaliation from their employers because of their efforts to unionize. Nurses in Maine faced an anti-labor campaign by their hospital managers during their organizing drive that included mandatory anti-union meetings, run by expensive union-busting consultants, that nurses were forced to attend during working hours. Nurses in North Carolina suffered vicious employer-led intimidation tactics to try to scare them from sharing their pro-union sympathies. And nurses in Texas who voted to form their union four months ago are still waiting on their hospital employer to come to terms on a first collective bargaining agreement. Management attacks on unions and the right to unionize have hurt nurses' efforts to improve patient care in their hospitals.

While the NLRA guarantees the right of every worker to organize a union and bargain collectively, the law currently lacks the enforcement mechanisms necessary to ensure a level playing field between workers who want to organize and their employers. Stronger enforcement mechanisms are needed to deter employers who currently break the law without suffering penalties.

The PRO Act would provide critical protections for nurses who want to organize collectively and, in turn, would help improve patient care. The dire need for this legislation has been made all the clearer during this pandemic. Due to employer neglect, nurses have been forced to struggle together for the most basic safety protections at their hospitals and clinics. Union organizing has led to improvements in infectious disease protocols, staffing levels, workplace violence prevention programs, and safe patient handling programs, all of which directly improve patient care.

The PRO Act would have a direct impact on registered nurses and all other workers by making the following improvements to current labor law:

- Prohibits employers from holding mandatory, anti-union meetings with employees;
- Imposes civil penalties on employers who violate the NLRA, allows corporate officials to be held personally liable for violating the NLRA, and allows workers the right to file a civil action against their employer for violating their NLRA rights;
- Improves recourse for workers who suffer retaliation from employers for union activity, by requiring the NLRB to immediately seek an injunction to reinstate fired employees while their cases are pending;
- Facilitates first contract agreements by establishing a process for mediation and arbitration to settle disputes;
- Prohibits any pre-dispute arbitration agreements from waiving the right to collective action or class action litigation for employees;
- Enhances the right of workers to support boycotts, strikes, and other acts of solidarity, including prohibiting employers from replacing striking workers;
- Eliminates right-to-work laws;
- Ends employer misclassification of employees as supervisors or independent contractors.

This legislation is of high priority for registered nurses across the country, and we hope you will join with us in supporting it. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Legislative Advocate, Hannah Bauman, at 240-472-1468. To co-sponsor the bill, please contact Dhrtvan Sherman with the House Committee on Education and the Workforce at Dhrtvan.Sherman@mail.house.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

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