

Davis, Gabbard Introduce Bill to Protect Nurses From Being Furloughed

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Reps. Rodney Davis (R-Ill) and Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) today introduced the Nurse Workforce Protection Act to prevent health care providers who receive COVID-19 relief from furloughing nurses. Davis and Gabbard are co-chairs of the House Nursing Caucus and May 6-12 is National Nurses Week.

In April, 1.4 million health care workers, including many nurses, lost their jobs. Congress has appropriated \$175 billion to help health care providers respond to COVID-19 and address lost revenue because of the virus. To be eligible for federal funding, the Nurse Workforce Protection Act requires a health care provider to retain at least 75% of its nurses and cannot reduce their pay or hours by more than 25%. Additionally, the bill prohibits providers from forcing nurses to take paid or unpaid leave.

"Nurses are the backbone of our health care delivery system and if a provider is receiving federal funding, they should not be furloughing nurses," Davis said. "Congress is providing \$175 billion to our health care providers and they should be using this funding, in part, to maintain staff. This bill simply asks the same of health care providers as we have of the small businesses participating in the Paycheck Protection Program: if you're receiving taxpayer dollars that will not be paid back, you should be using it to keep people employed."

"Nurses are our frontline heroes, putting their lives on the line during this public health crisis every single day. They deserve the support they need to do their jobs. Budgets should not be balanced on the backs of these vital workers who are saving people's lives. This is the very reason Congress created the Provider Relief Fund in the CARES Act," said Gabbard. "So many of our nurses are working under extreme conditions, suffering through major shortages of personal protective equipment, being separated from their families, and working sustained emergency hours and conditions. They have our backs. We must have theirs."