The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G. Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

As you know, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the corresponding government responses have had a drastic impact on all aspects of the U.S. economy. Massive labor shortages are wreaking havoc on nearly every industry - causing businesses to raise prices, cut hours of operation, or both.

Hospitals have perhaps felt the worst effects of the labor shortage with staff dwindling from burnout due to overtime demanded by COVID-19, vaccine mandates, and other onerous pandemic restrictions. These staffing problems have reduced patient capacity for hospitals of all sizes and left smaller critical access hospitals unable to transfer patients to larger acute care settings.

To fill these staffing vacancies and maintain their ability to treat patients, hospitals have often chosen to hire nurses from outside staffing agencies. The costs of these services have skyrocketed in recent months, with anecdotal reports of staffing agencies charging up to $155 per hour or more for nurses. These costs are unsustainable, and if left unchecked could threaten the financial solvency of critical health care providers.

I respectfully request that the Government Accountability Office commission a report on this issue and answer the following questions:

1. In terms of percentages, how much higher above baseline have hospitals paid for the services of nurse staffing agencies during the initial coronavirus wave, the delta variant wave, and the omicron variant wave?
2. In terms of dollar amounts, what is the average difference between what a nurse staffing agency charges per hour and what the agency nurse receives in compensation?
3. How do price increases to hospitals by nurse staffing agencies compare to other industry sectors where labor shortages have occurred during the COVID-19 public health emergency?
4. To what extent have COVID-19 vaccine mandates on health care workers had an impact on hospitals’ ability to hire and/or retain staff?

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Tracey Mann  
Member of Congress