

The Case for Health Care Reform

The link between health care and our nation's economic security and global competitiveness is undeniable. Having a sufficient nursing workforce to meet the demands of a highly diverse and aging population is an essential component to reforming the health care system as well as improving the health status of the nation and reducing health care costs.

Nurses and advanced practice nurses (nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, clinical nurse specialists, and certified registered nurse anesthetists) work in a variety of settings, including primary care, public health, long-term care, surgical care facilities, and hospitals. Approximately 59 percent of RN jobs are in hospitals. A federal report published in 2004 estimates that by 2020 the national nurse shortage will increase to more than 1 million full-time nurse positions. According to these projections, which are based on the current rate of nurses entering the profession, only 64 percent of projected demand will be met. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that about 233,000 additional jobs for registered nurses will open each year through 2016, in addition to about 2.5 million existing positions. Based on these scenarios, the shortage presents an extremely serious challenge in the delivery of high-quality, cost effective services, as the nation looks to reform the current healthcare system.

The Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief (ANSR) Alliance believes Congress should work to provide all people in the nation with equitable access to comprehensive health care services. In order to resolve the health care crisis in the country, the ANSR Alliance believes that health care reform must:

Insurance Reform

- Provide meaningful and affordable health care coverage for all Americans.
- Promote and utilize evidence-based knowledge to promote quality health care services.

Primary and Preventive Care

- Include transitional care models/health care innovations led by nurses that demonstrate improved quality and cost outcomes in the delivery of care to chronically ill patients.
- Expand the use of nurse managed health centers. Fund demonstration projects to increase the use of these safety net providers for the provision of care to the under and uninsured.
- Recognize the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) as one of the category of health care providers to contribute to the public health and primary health care infrastructure.

Health Care Workforce

- Expand the Advance Education Nursing Grants to increase diversity among APRNs.
- Expand the Nurse Loan Repayment program to students who serve as nurse faculty.
- Expand funding for recruitment and retention efforts to increase the U.S. Public Health Service nursing workforce.
- Establish a career ladder program to increase nursing capacity.
- Reinstigate the capitation grant program to schools of nursing in support of nursing education.

The Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief (ANSR) Alliance represents a diverse cross-section of health care and other related organizations, health care providers, and supporters of nursing issues that have united to address the national nursing shortage.