

March 12, 2009

Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, FAAN
Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane, Parklawn 14-05
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Administrator Wakefield:

On behalf of the 37 undersigned nursing organizations, we urge you and your fellow administrators to equitably award the funding for health professions training between the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and the Title VII Health Professions Training Programs that was recently authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1) and totaled \$200 million. This equal distribution would provide at least \$100 million for both the Title VII and VIII programs over fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

As you are well aware, the Title VIII programs have been the largest source of federal funding for nursing education over the last 45 years. These programs have supported the education and careers of thousands of future nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, and nurse faculty. However, in recent years, Title VIII funding has remained stagnant and has not kept pace with inflation or rising educational costs. Therefore, the community was thrilled to see that President Obama and Congress believed that making an investment in the Title VIII programs was essential in our nation's ability to fill over 140,000 vacant nursing positions. Nursing funding will impact all sectors of the healthcare industry including the acute care setting, home healthcare, nursing homes, health departments, community health centers, and the nursing services provided in our nation's schools and workplaces, only to name a few.

We ask that the funding allocations made to Title VIII adhere to the conference report language and the language in H.R. 1, which states that

“the remaining \$200,000,000 is allocated for all the disciplines trained through the primary care medicine and dentistry program, the public health and preventive medicine program, the scholarship and loan repayment programs authorized in Title VII (Health Professions) and Title VIII (Nurse Training) of the PHS Act, and grants to training programs for equipment.” (Conference language) **AND** *“That funds may be used to provide scholarships, loan repayment, and grants to training programs for equipment/authorized in the PHS Act”* (Bill language).

Therefore, we respectfully request that half of the “\$200 million” (\$100 million) be distributed equally to the three loan repayment/scholarship/traineeship programs under Title VIII, which include the Nurse Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program (NLRSP), the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP), and the Advanced Education Nursing (AEN) Grants/Traineeships. This would equate to approximately \$33.3 million for each program over two years or \$16.65 million for each program in FY 2009 and 2010. To illustrate the great benefit additional funding would offer these programs, the Nursing Community has

calculated projections as to the number of potential students that could be support in FY 2009.

In FY 2008, the NLRSP supported 604 students and was funded at \$30.51 million. If this program was to receive an additional \$16.65 million in FY 2009, considering an 11% increase in educational costs and standard inflation, the program could support approximately 830 nursing students.

In FY 2008, the NFLP supported 729 future nurse faculty and was funded at \$7.86 million. If this program was to receive an additional \$16.65 million in FY 2009, considering an 11% increase in educational costs and standard inflation, the program could support approximately 2,018 graduate nursing students.

In FY 2008, the AEN Grants/Traineeships supported 12,979 students, both directly and indirectly, and was funded at \$61.88 million. If this program was to receive an additional \$16.65 million in FY 2009, considering an 11% increase in educational costs and standard inflation, the program could support approximately 14,659 nursing students.

Additionally, we request that the application requirements for the NLRSP, NFLP, and AEN program do not change so that funding is available to both private and public institutions.

Finally, we ask that when HRSA works to devise a plan to distribute the \$300 million allocated to the National Health Service Corps, the 10% set aside for Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Midwives, and Physicians Assistants, authorized through the scholarship and loan repayment awards, be honored and incorporated into the final decision.

We believe this is a solid investment at a time when millions of Americans are unemployed and well-paid registered nursing jobs are going unfilled. Nursing positions are in great demand as there is currently an 8.1% vacancy rate across the country according to American Hospital Association. Funding for nurse training will lead to real jobs because a very real need exists. The demand for nursing jobs can only be met with nurses graduating from these training programs. Funding for nurse training will meaningfully contribute to the reduction of the unemployment rate.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. As the largest group of health professionals, the need to fill vacant nursing positions now and in the future rests on the ability to educate and graduate qualified professional nurses quickly. This infusion of funding will allow nursing students across the country to attend school full-time and enter the workplace faster.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordinators
American Association of Nurse Executives
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American College of Nurse Practitioners
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Public Health Association, Public Health Nursing Section
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing
Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
Dermatology Nurses' Association
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
National American Arab Nurses Association
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National League for Nursing
National Nursing Centers Consortium
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
Visiting Nurse Associations of America

cc:

Marcia Brand, Ph.D., Associate Administrator, Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration
Michele Richardson, Director of the Division of Nursing, Health Resources and Services Administration