

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Support Nurse Education Programs

February 26, 2008

This is a programmatic request and does not require additional Member certification.

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in signing the attached letter urging the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee to provide \$200 million for the Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) in FY 2009.

Our country is still facing a nursing shortage that is expected to reach epic proportions within the next twelve years. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) the supply of nurses in America will fall 36 percent below the needed level (more than one million nurses) by the year 2020 if aggressive intervention is not taken.

The Title VIII programs have been a proven solution to past nursing shortages when provided with adequate support. These programs support individuals training as nursing professionals and the institutions that provide that training. Today, the Title VIII programs continue to be effective, despite the dire need for additional funding. The Nurse Faculty Loan Program assisted 729 future nurse educators in FY 2007. Yet, due to a lack of funding, 40 percent of the Advanced Education Nursing (AEN) Grant applicants were not accepted in FY 2007. Unfortunately, the President's FY 2009 budget proposal recommends that the AEN program, which supports programs that prepare graduate-level nurses to be primary care providers and nurse faculty, should be eliminated, while proposing a reduction to the funding allocation for Title VIII by 30 percent.

Last year, the President similarly proposed to decrease funding by 30 percent, but a strong response from Congress restored funding and increased the FY 2008 appropriation by 12% over the FY 2007 level. The \$200 million requested in the attached letter is once again needed to support these programs and avoid cuts to advanced education nursing programs that help increase the number of nurses in our country, improve their skills and enable them to stay in the nursing field.

Please join us in supporting nurses. If you would like to sign, or if you have any questions, please contact Amy Fisher in Rep. Capps' office (5-3601) or Kate Ostrander in Rep. LaTourette's office (5-5731).

Sincerely,



LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress



STEVEN C. LaTOURETTE
Member of Congress

February xx, 2008

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

We respectfully request that the Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) receive \$200 million in appropriations for FY 2009. Despite Congress' strong commitment to Title VIII funding in FY 2008, the President's FY 2009 budget proposal cut the programs by 30 percent from last year's funding level. Specifically, the Advanced Education Nursing (AEN) program, which supports programs that prepare graduate-level nurses to be primary care providers and nurse faculty, was eliminated. We believe a funding level of \$200 million is needed to maintain advanced education nursing programs, to invest in nursing education capacity, and to support programs that direct nurses into critical shortage areas.

For ten years, our nation has faced a nursing shortage unprecedented in its depth and duration. Unfortunately, it is expected to worsen in the coming years with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projecting that the nation's nursing shortage will grow to more than one million nurses by the year 2020. The current reality of the shortage was quantified by an April 2006 report published by the American Hospital Association, which states that U.S. hospitals need approximately 118,000 Registered Nurses to fill vacant positions nationwide. The nursing shortage is also impacting the military sector. In 2006, the Air Force, Army, and Navy experienced overall nurse vacancy rates of 15 percent, 8 percent, and 9.6 percent, respectively.

Further inhibiting the growth of the civilian and military nursing workforce is a significant shortage of nurse faculty. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, schools of nursing turned away 42,866 qualified applicants to baccalaureate and graduate programs primarily due to insufficient numbers of faculty. This element of the shortage has created a negative chain reaction—without more nurse faculty additional nurses cannot be educated, and without more nurses, the shortage will continue.

The current fiscal environment makes determining appropriations levels for all programs difficult. Yet, Congress must invest more in the nursing workforce crisis because it is impacting the quality and safety of our healthcare system. The shortage is expected to place healthcare delivery in further jeopardy as the baby boomer population ages, medical technology advances, and the need for health care grows. Now is the time to invest in nursing. Your support for \$200 million in FY 2009 funding for Nursing Workforce Development programs will make a real difference in the lives of healthcare consumers, nurses, and the teachers committed to educating the nursing workforce's next generation.

Sincerely,