



March 16, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) appreciates the Subcommittee's steadfast support of Nursing Workforce Development programs, which have a direct impact on preparing the future nursing workforce and ensuring access to high quality, evidence-based care. The importance of these programs is even more evident today as nursing students, faculty, and graduates are on the frontlines administering vaccines, caring for patients, confronting vaccine hesitancy, and responding to this public health challenge. As you consider and advance the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-ED) appropriations bill, AACN respectfully requests bold support for the nursing workforce by providing:

- **\$530 million for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs** (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et. seq]), a necessary doubling of funding for these essential programs that support current and future nurses; and
- **\$46.1 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which includes at least \$193 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR).**

As the national voice for academic nursing, AACN represents over 840 schools of nursing at private and public universities, who educate more than 560,000 students and employ more than 50,000 faculty. Collectively, these institutions graduate our nation's registered nurses (RN), advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), educators, researchers, and frontline providers. Our member schools are committed to preparing a highly educated nursing workforce and strengthening the foundation of nursing science, not only as we confront existing health challenges, but as we provide tomorrow's equitable and innovative healthcare solutions.

Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs

A well-educated nursing workforce is essential, which has been abundantly clear in our ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19. For over fifty years, Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs have consistently and continually built the supply and distribution of highly educated nurses by strengthening nursing education at all levels, from entry-level preparation through graduate study. Through grants, scholarships, and loan repayments programs, these vital federal investments positively impact the profession's ability to serve America's patients across the country, especially those most in need; bolster diversity within the workforce; and increase the number of nurses trained to serve in a variety of capacities, including at the forefront of public health emergencies and caring for our aging population.

Federal support of Title VIII programs and the nursing pipeline is critical. In fact, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2019-2029 outlook for RN workforce demand projected an increase of 7%, representing the need for an additional 221,900 jobs.¹ Demand for certain APRNs (nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse-midwives) is expected to grow even more, by 45%.² To meet this growing need, and as we confront the impact COVID-19 has on the profession, we must sustain and expand funding for these essential nursing workforce programs.

Each of the programs that comprise Title VIII have a unique and vital mission aimed at promoting nursing care throughout all communities, including vulnerable and underserved areas. These programs also offer opportunities to help educate nurses and address patient demand. For example, the Advanced Nursing Education (ANE) programs increase the number of APRNs in the primary care workforce and supported more than 9,000 students in Academic Year 2018-2019 alone.³ In fact, the ANE programs support students studying to become our nation's nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse-midwives, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and other nurses requiring a master's or doctoral degree by providing federal support, as well as faculty development, to ensure a robust nursing workforce.

Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs also support the nursing faculty who prepare today's students to be tomorrow's nurses. This is done through the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP), which in Academic Year 2018-2019 awarded 80 schools NFLP grants that supported 2,277 graduate nursing students.⁴ According to preliminary results from AACN's annual survey, enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs increased nearly 6% in 2020.⁵ We need to ensure these students have ample nursing faculty to guide them through their clinical and didactic education and prepare them to respond to our nation's ever-changing healthcare environment.

As we address social determinants of health and work to build an equitable healthcare system for all patients, it is imperative that we recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds to the nursing profession. Increasing diversity in the profession will not only create lifelong career pathways, but will also improve quality and population-centered care. The Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) program serves as a glowing example of a successful Title VIII initiative that accomplishes this goal. In fact, in Academic Year 2018-2019, this program awarded grants supporting 11,067 nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁶ The recruitment of underrepresented racial and ethnic individuals and those from economically diverse backgrounds to nursing positively impacts the classroom, professional practice environments, and ultimately the patient.

From the classroom to the frontlines, nurses and nursing students are integral members of the healthcare team. Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs are critical to ensuring a robust nurse workforce to meet our nation's healthcare needs. Your bold support for Title VIII

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm>

³ Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2021 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Pages 141-143 <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

⁴ Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2021 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Page 154 <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

⁵ American Association of Colleges of Nursing Graduation and Enrollment Data, 2021

⁶ Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2021 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Page 146 <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

programs through doubling funding in FY 2022 is essential to ensuring a healthier America during this public health challenge and beyond.

National Institute of Nursing Research

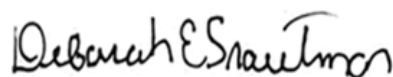
AACN recognizes that scientific research and discovery is the foundation on which nursing practice is built and is essential to advancing evidence-based interventions, informing policy, and sustaining the health of the nation. As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at NIH, the NINR is an integral part to improving care and is on the cutting edge of new innovations that impact how nurses are educated and how they practice. In fact, 80% of research-focused educational training grants at schools of nursing are funded by NINR.⁷ Through these grants and others, nurse scientists, often working collaboratively with other health professionals, are generating and translating impactful new findings in areas such as big data and data science, precision health, and genomics.⁸

Enhanced support for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR is essential to sustaining a strong nursing workforce able to care for our nation's population during times of public crises. AACN appreciates the Subcommittee's consideration of these FY 2022 requests and looks forward to working with you as we continue to strengthen academic nursing and the nursing workforce. If AACN can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact AACN's Director of Government Affairs, Rachel Stevenson, at (202) 463-6930, ext. 271 or rstevenson@aacnnursing.org.

Sincerely,



Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, RN, FAAN
Board Chair



Deborah E. Trautman, PhD, RN, FAAN
President and Chief Executive Officer

CC:

Senator Richard Durbin
Senator Jack Reed
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Jeff Merkley
Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Chris Murphy
Senator Joe Manchin
Senator Richard Shelby
Senator Lindsey Graham
Senator Jerry Moran
Senator Shelley Moore Capito

⁷ Journal of Professional Nursing (2019) National Institute of Health (NIH) funding patterns in Schools of Nursing: Who is funding nursing science research and who is conducting research at Schools of Nursing? <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755722319301164?via=ihub#>

⁸ National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Nursing Research. *The NINR Strategic Plan: Advancing Science, Improving Lives*. Retrieved from https://www.ninr.nih.gov/sites/www.ninr.nih.gov/files/NINR_StratPlan2016_reduced.pdf

Senator John Kennedy
Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith
Senator Mike Braun
Senator Marco Rubio