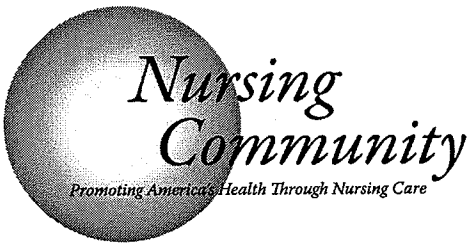


May 14, 2009

Senator Daniel Inouye
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inouye:

On behalf of the 2.9 million nurses who serve as the backbone of our nation's healthcare system, the undersigned organizations are writing to respectfully request **your support of President Obama's FY 2010 budget proposal for the Nursing Workforce Development programs authorized under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.).** This funding level would provide $263.4 million for these programs to address the national nursing shortage. As Congress and the Administration work to develop policy strategies to repair our nation's healthcare system, healthcare workforce shortages must be addressed. In particular, investing in the growth of the nursing workforce is essential to providing access to high quality care. The Title VIII programs are a vehicle to make this investment.

One issue that has been noted broadly during health reform discussions is the need for primary care providers. Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), which include Nurse Practitioners (NPs) and Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs), currently serve in these roles nationwide and are ready to fill the demand. Primary care providers like NPs and CNMs offer preventative as well as obstetric care and treat numerous health conditions. Last year, over 7,000 students graduated from NP and CNM programs, and over 27,000 students are currently enrolled in these programs.

Demand is also growing for other types of APRNs who provide high quality care, particularly to our nation's rural and medically underserved communities. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) are essential to ensuring that these areas have access to anesthesia and pain care services. In some states, CRNAs are the sole anesthesia providers in almost 100% of rural hospitals. In the last eight years, CRNA graduates have doubled, yet the vacancy rate for nurse anesthetists has remained the same due to an increasing demand for anesthesia services, an aging population, and CRNA retirements. In addition, as our nation looks toward implementing coordinated care models, Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) are experts whose services include care coordination for individuals and also for populations such as the elderly and those with chronic diseases. CNSs are known for improving clinical care in ways that reduce healthcare costs and for their direct impact on the quality and safety of care delivered across healthcare systems. The current demand for CNSs nationwide far exceeds the supply.

According to the Association of State & Territorial Health Officials, public health nursing was identified as the field where public health workforce shortages will be most severe. During healthcare reform discussions, considerable focus has been placed on the importance of primary prevention, including the cost savings primary prevention will provide. Anticipating this demand for public

health providers, there will be an increased need for nurses trained at the master's level in the area of population focused practice.

The **Advanced Education Nurse Grant and Traineeship programs** under Title VIII provide the necessary funds to ensure the pool of primary care providers is strengthened and APRNs are available to work in medically underserved areas. In addition, this program helps support the education of nurses pursuing their master's in public health nursing whose services are growing in demand. In FY 2008, these grants and traineeships helped graduate and support the education of over 18,000 graduate nurses.

The nursing workforce shortage is further complicated by the demand for nurse educators. The shortage of nurse faculty has been recognized by President Obama as a challenge that requires a bipartisan solution. Last year, schools of nursing turned away tens of thousands of qualified applicants to nursing programs. The top reason cited for not accepting these potential students was a lack 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 **Nurse Faculty Loan program** under Title VIII was established to help address this shortage. In FY 2008, these grants supported the education of 729 nurse educators and helped graduate 401 future nurse faculty.

Retention also proves to be a critical issue as the nation looks to address the shortage of nurses. In 2005, Dr. Peter Buerhaus and colleagues found that more than 75% of RNs believe the nursing shortage presents a major problem for the quality of their work life, the quality of care, and the amount of time nurses can spend with patients. Looking forward, almost all surveyed nurses see the shortage in the future as a catalyst for increasing stress on nurses (98%), lowering patient care quality (93%) and causing nurses to leave the profession (93%). In 2007, Dr. Christine T. Kovner and colleagues found that 13% of newly licensed RNs had changed principal jobs after one year, and 37% reported that they felt ready to change jobs. The **Nurse Education, Practice, and Retention Program** under Title VIII provides strategies to address the retention challenges facing our nation's hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

Each aspect of our nation's workforce shortages presents a unique challenge. One that has continued to significantly impact our nation's healthcare system is the shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs). In July 2008, the American Health Care Association reported that more than 19,400 RN vacancies exist in long-term care settings. These vacancies, coupled with an additional 116,000 open positions in hospitals reported by the American Hospital Association in July 2007, bring the total RN vacancies in the U.S. to more than 135,000. The demand for nurses will continue to grow as the baby-boomer population ages, nurses retire, and the need for healthcare intensifies. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nursing is the nation's top profession in terms of projected job growth with more than 587,000 new nursing positions being created through 2016 (a 23.5% increase). Therefore, the undersigned organizations were pleased to see President Obama's significant investment in the **Nurse Loan Repayment and Scholarship programs** under Title VIII.

Building a nursing workforce is critical to improving quality care. However, it is also important to focus on the development of a nursing workforce that emulates our nation's diverse population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the nation's minority population totaled 100.7 million in 2007. HRSA reports that only 10.7 percent of the nursing workforce represents ethnic or racial minority groups. According to the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, policy advisors to Congress and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, diversifying the nursing profession is essential to meeting the healthcare needs of the nation and reducing health disparities

that exist among many underserved populations. The **Nursing Workforce Diversity program** under Title VIII helps to ensure the nursing workforce expands its diversity.

With additional funding in FY 2010, these important programs will have improved resources to address the multiple factors contributing to the nationwide nursing shortage, including the shortage of faculty. For 45 years, APRNs and RNs have relied upon support through Title VIII to complete their preparation and offset considerable educational expenses. The undersigned organizations are grateful for the President's acknowledgement of the challenges facing nursing education and the effectiveness of the Title VIII programs, and we are hopeful that Congress will support his efforts to improve funding for these critical programs. Without an adequate supply of nurses to care for our nation and our aging population, efforts to reform our system will be ineffective. We thank you in advance for your support of the President's request for $263.4 million in FY 2010 for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs. Please consider the organizations listed below as resources to you and your colleagues on the nation's nursing shortage and healthcare related issues.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurse
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American College of Nurse Practitioners
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Association of State & Territorial Directors of Nursing
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Dermatology Nurses' Association
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
International Society of Nurses in Genetics
National American Arab Nurses Association
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
National Student Nurses' Association, Inc.
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
Philippine Nurses Association of America, Inc.
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Public Health Nursing Section/American Public Health Association
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society