August 26, 2008

The Honorable Tom Latham  
United States House of Representatives  
2447 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.  20515

Dear Representative Latham:

On behalf of the American Nephrology Nurses' Association (ANNA), I am writing to express our appreciation for your introduction of H.R. 6652, the Nurses' Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act of 2008. This important legislation will help address the issue of nursing faculty shortage which is greatly impacting the ability of the country to have an adequate nursing workforce.

ANNA is a professional nursing organization of more than 12,000 registered nurses practicing in nephrology. ANNA members are intimately involved in the supervision and delivery of care to adults and children with kidney disease. Our members work in a variety of settings including dialysis facilities, transplant centers, Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) clinics, acute care, ambulatory clinics, and long term care. ANNA’s purpose is to advance nephrology nursing practice and positively influence outcomes for patients with kidney disease through advocacy, scholarship, and excellence.

As you know, the Health Resources and Services Administration estimates that the nation is currently experiencing a nursing shortage of more than 200,000 registered nurses. This figure is expected to more than quadruple by the year 2020, leaving the United States with 36 percent fewer nurses in the workforce than is needed to meet the future nursing care demands.

This shortage is the direct result of universities being unable to meet the demand of students wishing to enter the nursing profession. According to a study conducted by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, titled Special Survey for AACN Membership on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2007-2008, “30,000 qualified applicants were turned away from baccalaureate nursing programs last year due primarily to an intensifying shortage of nurse faculty.”
According to the AACN survey, one of the major reasons for the shortage of nurse educators is the financial disincentive for entering nurse education. The average annual salary for an associate professor of nursing with a master’s degree is nearly 20 percent less than the average salary for a nurse practitioner.

Your legislation creates financial incentives for registered nurses to enter the field of higher education. Students holding a master’s or doctorate degree in nursing are selected to participate in the program which provides student loan forgiveness in exchange for a four year teaching commitment in an accredited school of nursing.

Thank you again for taking positive steps towards addressing the nursing faculty shortage through the introduction of H.R. 6652, the *Nurses' Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act of 2008*. We appreciate your support and look forward to working with you.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Washington Representative, Jim Twaddell (james.twaddell@dbr.com/202-230-5130), if you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Sue Cary RN, MN, APRN, CNN
ANNA President