



June 11, 2026

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jen Kiggans
United States House of Representatives
152 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Merkley and Congresswoman Kiggans:

On behalf of the 65 undersigned organizations representing the Nursing Community Coalition (NCC), we thank you for introducing the Nursing is a Professional Degree Act (S.4568/H.R.8691). The NCC is a cross section of education, practice, research, and regulation within the nursing profession, representing Registered Nurses (RNs), Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs),¹ nurse leaders, boards of nursing, students, faculty, and researchers. Together, the NCC appreciates the introduction of this vital effort to ensure that advanced nursing education pathways remain strong, and urges Congress to pass the Nursing is a Professional Degree Act this year.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21) established new annual and aggregate limits on federal student loans for graduate degree programs of \$20,500 and \$100,000 respectively, compared to \$50,000 and \$200,000 for professional programs. On May 1, the Department of Education released its Reimagining and Improving Student Education final rule implementing these loan limits. Despite widespread support for nursing, including by more than 160 bipartisan members of Congress, the Department's final rule excluded post-baccalaureate nursing degrees (MSN, DNP, and PhD) from the regulatory definition of professional degree programs. This exclusion comes as the Department acknowledged in the final rule that post-baccalaureate nursing programs meet the three-part criteria put forward by Congress in P.L. 119-21 to be deemed a professional degree.

As we look at investing in the health of our nation, it is evident that post-baccalaureate nurses are a critical part of our health system and that investments in nursing education provide a strong return on investment across the board, particularly for our rural and underserved communities. Given that the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the demand for most APRNs will increase by 35% through 2034,² these new loan limits will have far-reaching consequences for our current and future nursing workforce and the patients they serve. Ensuring that post-baccalaureate nursing students, our future front-line providers, APRNs, faculty, researchers, scientists, and leaders, are included as professional degree programs is essential.

¹ APRNs include certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and nurse practitioners (NPs)

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2026). 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>

As Congress considers ways to support our current and future nursing workforce, and we continue to strive to ensure that nursing is considered a professional degree, we truly appreciate your support by introducing the Nursing is a Professional Degree Act (S.4568/H.R.8691) and strongly encourage the passage of this vital effort this Congress. If the Nursing Community Coalition can be of any assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact the coalition's Executive Director, Rachel Minahan at rstevenson@thenursingcommunity.org.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses
Academy of Neonatal Nursing
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
American Academy of Emergency Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Heart Failure Nurses
American Association of Neuroscience Nurses
American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American Association of Post-Acute Care Nursing
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Nursing Informatics Association
American Organization for Nursing Leadership
American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association, Inc.
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Public Health Association, Public Health Nursing Section
American Society for Pain Management Nursing
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nursing
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses
Association of PeriOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Public Health Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Association of Veterans Affairs Nurse Anesthetists
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
Dermatology Nurses' Association
DNP's of Color
Emergency Nurses Association
Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association

Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
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 Association of School Nurses
National Black Nurses Association
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers
National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence
National League for Nursing
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
NurseTRUST
Oncology Nursing Society
Organization for Associate Degree Nursing
Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Society of Pediatric Nurses
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society

cc:

Senate Majority Leader John Thune
Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer
Speaker of the House Mike Johnson
House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
Senator Roger Wicker
Senator Cynthia Lummis
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Representative Dave Joyce
Representative Jack Bergman
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Representative John Rutherford
Representative Randy Fine
Representative Ryan Mackenzie
Representative Robert Wittman
Representative Robert Bresnahan
Representative Jefferson Van Drew

Representative Sarah Elfreth
Representative Kevin Kiley