

STATEMENT

of the

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

to the

United States House Committee on Energy and Commerce

regarding

SETTING FISCAL PRIORITIES IN HEALTH CARE FUNDING

March 8, 2011

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The American Nurses Association (ANA) is deeply concerned over the proposed elimination of the \$200 million mandatory appropriation for the construction of school-based health centers (SBHC) brought before Committee on March 9th. These cost-effective programs positively impact the lives of children across the country, and we strongly urge the members of the committee to preserve and commit these vital funds for SBHCs.

ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses, and advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, and sharing a constructive and realistic view of nursing's contribution to the health of our nation.

Nurses are strong supporters of community and home-based models of care. We believe that the foundation for a wellness-based health care system is built in these settings, reducing the amount of both money and human suffering that accompany acute-care episodes. School-Based Health Centers are an excellent example of a community based model of care.

Almost 2,000 School-based primary care clinics across the country provide access to high quality, comprehensive medical care to approximately 1.7 million children and adolescents in 44 states and the District of Columbia. The SBHCs services provided by the school based health care team are determined locally through a collaborative process and may include but are not limited to: primary care for acute and chronic health conditions, mental health services, substance abuse services, dental health services, and nutrition education.

The recent *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* report commissioned by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Institute of Medicine, stated that SBHCs nationwide, have the following positive characteristics and impacts:

- SBHCS are prevention and wellness oriented
- SBHCS see children who otherwise would not get care
- SBHCs offer the opportunity for one in four adolescents who are at risk for adverse health outcomes such as teen pregnancies, suicide and substance abuse to easily and readily access services in a setting where they spend the majority of their days

School-Based Health Centers are cost effective, providing an ideal environment to administer preventive health care to children. A study by Emory University, as well as other studies, has attributed school-based health centers to reductions in Medicaid expenditures related to inpatient, drug, and emergency room use; improvements in health outcomes, and a rise in school attendance and graduation.

Currently, more than 350 applicants are seeking funding through the first round of competitive grants created under the School-Based Health Center Capital (SBHCC) Program (HRSA-11-127). These applications came from all regions of the country, representing rural, urban, and suburban constituencies. Almost all of the SBHCs that receive funds from federal grant sources also receive grant funds from nonfederal sources, including state governments and private foundations (GAO-11-18R). The one-time federal funding provided by the Affordable Care Act will be leveraged with other sources to provide needed primary, mental, and oral health care.

Because the question of the health of our Nation's children is so fundamental, ANA urges the Committee not to undermine funding for School-Based Health Centers.

ANA looks forward to working with Chairman Pitts, Ranking Member Pallone, the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, and other members of the Committee in order to ensure that we invest in SBHCs and other cost-effective models that improve access to primary and preventative care. Committing these resources to SBHCs is truly a wise investment in our children and our nation's health.

ANA would be happy to provide additional resources or assistance as the committee moves forward on this and other issues related to health care and nursing.