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March 19, 2008

The Honorable Michael Leavitt  
Secretary  
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Advisory Committee on Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020

Dear Secretary Leavitt,

On behalf of the American Nurses Association, which represents the interests of the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses, we are writing to officially request your assistance in correcting what surely must be an unintentional oversight – the lack of representation of the nursing profession and nursing community on the Secretary's Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020. As described in the HHS news release of February 1, 2008, the Advisory Committee is comprised of several distinguished physicians, academicians, and health administrators. However, the failure to appoint a representative from the single-largest health profession – which is at the forefront of health promotion and disease prevention – represents a failure to recognize both the crucial role that nurses play as well as the need to integrate nurses into any health promotion and disease objectives and plans, and sends the wrong message to the nursing and public health communities.

Registered nurses work daily and continuously with patients and communities to promote health and prevent disease. RNs are involved in every arena of health care and health promotion, from staff nurses in hospitals, to ambulatory care nurses in schools and public health, to mental health counseling, to running hospitals and clinics, to nursing education and research. And the list could go on, endlessly. Advanced practice registered nurses include nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse midwives. Of approximately 106,000 nurse practitioners working in the United States, 96.5 percent have prescriptive authority; 39 percent hold hospital admission privileges; and 13 percent have long-term care admission privileges.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, nurses have historically been responsible for taking the lead on patient advocacy and patient education, beginning with Florence Nightingale.

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<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, 2003-2004 NP Practice Site Survey and 2004 NP Sample Survey. [www.aanp.org](http://www.aanp.org).

Furthermore, the burgeoning nursing shortage, combined with inadequate funding for nursing education, pose significant threats to our public health. The Health Resources and Services Administration has projected that, absent aggressive intervention, the supply of nurses in America will fall 36 percent (over 1 million nurses) below requirements by the year 2020.<sup>2</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that from 2004-2014, nursing will account for the second largest number of new jobs among all occupations, requiring more than 1.2 million new nurses.<sup>3</sup>

With the nursing shortage in this country predicted to reach crisis levels by the year 2020, how will our nation possibly attain its goals for good health and disease prevention, without the participation and support of the nursing community?

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) nominated Dr. Janet Allan, Dean of the University of Maryland, School of Nursing for appointment to the Advisory Committee, and she would be a valuable contributor to this important work. In addition to Dr. Allan, there are many other well qualified candidates who could represent the nursing profession as well. We urge you to address the lack of nursing representation on this important committee. If you should have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Eileen Carlson, Associate Director of Government Affairs, [eileen.carlson@ana.org](mailto:eileen.carlson@ana.org), 301-628-5093.

Respectfully submitted,

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<sup>2</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration (September 2004). What is Behind HRSA's Projected Supply, Demand, and Shortages of Registered Nurses?

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos083.htm>.