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NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 26, 2008

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HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT CRITICAL TO SUCCESSFUL HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM, SAYS AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION *ANA Board adopts revised Health System Reform Agenda & Strategic Plan*

SILVER SPRING, MD – As part of its long standing and aggressive education and advocacy work for guaranteed affordable and accessible health care for all, the American Nurses Association (ANA) today released *ANA's Health System Reform Agenda*, an update of the organization's 2005 call for comprehensive health care reform. ANA's *Health System Reform Agenda* calls for dramatic changes in the US health care system in order to achieve guaranteed, high-quality, affordable health care for all.

In addition to addressing health care cost, quality and access, *ANA's Agenda* confronts the under-reported challenge of providing a health care workforce that is capable of providing high quality, accessible care in a rapidly changing health care system. ANA, with its unique perspective and as a recognized leader in healthcare policy formation, spotlights for the nation the necessity of developing and supporting a quality healthcare workforce as a vital element for successful health system reform.

“With the 2008 presidential election in full swing, health care reform has grabbed the nation's attention as a front-burner priority – and for good reason,” remarked ANA President Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR. “Nurses have a pivotal perspective to share; we are the glue holding much of the current broken health care system together. We witness the daily instability and problems patients face. No one works more closely with patients than nurses. Patton continued, “*ANA's Health System Reform Agenda* brings the largest single group of healthcare professionals in the US – registered nurses -- to this urgent national discussion.”

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In its newly adopted strategic plan, ANA emphasizes “safe staffing” as a priority concern for nurses and patients alike in health system reform. “A patient may have the best insurance coverage available, but if there are not enough registered nurses on the unit to give that patient the care and attention he or she requires and deserves, it remains inadequate.” “Nurses must be a central part of hospital’s everyday staffing decisions, so that patients’ safety can come first,” said Linda J. Stierle, MSN, RN, CNAA,BC, CEO of the American Nurses Association.

Second, ANA shines the light on current barriers that preclude many nurses from providing the full array of quality care they are educated and licensed to give patients. Advance practice registered nurses (APRNs), those nurses who have achieved a Master’s level or higher education in nursing, are reliable and tested providers of primary care. “These nurses can prescribe, diagnose, and treat illness, but they are not being fully utilized to provide urgently needed primary care, despite the shortage of primary care physicians,” said Cynthia Haney, JD, ANA’s Nursing Practice and Policy Senior Fellow. Registered nurses (RNs) are specialist in health education, disease prevention, chronic care management and coordination of care – all elements that experts believe must be present in a superior health system.

ANA’s advocacy for guaranteed affordable health care for all, reflected in its newly released *Health System Reform Agenda*, is rooted in decades of policy work. In 1989, ANA’s “Task Force on Health Policy Support of Access, Quality and Cost Efficiency,” began a collaboration with the broader nursing community, to create *Nursing’s Agenda for Health Care Reform* (ANA, 1991), a blueprint for reform that was endorsed by 60 nursing and health care organizations.

In 2005, noting that America’s health care system had continued a pattern of fragmentation and increasing costs over the intervening years, ANA’s Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics updated the 1991 document, adding an essential set of recommendations calling for both public and private support and development of the nursing workforce. For health care to be effective, safe, fair, and affordable, there must be an adequate supply of well-educated, well-distributed and well-utilized registered nurses.

This key policy document was revised again in January of 2008, to reflect the rapidly accumulating, most current scientific evidence underlying elements of the plan. Renamed *ANA’s Health System Reform Agenda*, this urgent call for health system reform is part of ANA’s professional and ethical obligation to maintain the integrity of nursing practice and pursue the best possible health care for the nation’s people.

To view the ANA’s Health System Reform Agenda, please visit this link, <http://cms.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/HealthcareandPolicyIssues/HSR.aspx>.

The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation’s 2.9 million registered nurses through its 54 constituent member nurses associations. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.