

Support Nurse Education Programs

March 5, 2009

This is a programmatic request and does not require additional Member certification.

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in signing the attached letter urging the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee to provide \$215 million for the Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) in FY 2010.

Our nation is facing an eleven year nursing shortage that is projected to continue for at least another decade. We must make a significant investment in the Title VIII programs if we are to reverse this trend. In addition, while thousands of Americans are unemployed, over 140,000 nursing positions remain vacant in acute care settings, home healthcare, nursing homes, health departments, community health centers, schools, and workplaces. Providing support for nursing education is the key to filling these vacant positions and helping Americans begin well-paid and rewarding careers in healthcare.

The Title VIII programs have been a proven solution to past nursing shortages when provided with adequate funding. These programs support the education of registered nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, nurse faculty, and nurse researchers. However, over the last three years, relatively flat Title VIII funding, combined with rising educational and administrative costs, as well as inflation, has significantly decreased the programs' purchasing power. In FY 2006, the programs supported 91,189 nurses and nursing students. In FY 2007 and 2008, the number of grantees supported dropped by 21% and 28 % respectively.

In FY 2008, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) was forced to turn away 92% of the applicants for the Nurse Education Loan Repayment Program. This important program directs new nursing graduates into health facilities deemed to have a critical shortage – such as departments of public health, community health centers, and disproportionate share hospitals.

The continuing shortage of registered nurses poses real challenges to our health care system and in the longer term to potential health care reform plans. Fortunately, the Title VIII programs are structured to address the educational, retention, and recruitment needs of the nursing workforce, but the programs cannot meet this need without additional funding.

Please join us in supporting nurses. If you would like to sign, or if you have any questions, please contact Amy Fisher in Rep. Capps' office (5-3601) or Dana Richter in Rep. LoBiondo's office (5-6572).

Sincerely,

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress

FRANK LOBIONDO
Member of Congress

March XX, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We respectfully request that the Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) receive \$215 million in appropriations for FY 2010. At a time when our nation is facing an eleven year nursing shortage that is projected to continue for at least another decade, a significant investment must be made in the Title VIII programs to reverse this trend.

When thousands of Americans are unemployed, over 140,000 nursing positions remain vacant in acute care settings, home healthcare, nursing homes, health departments, community health centers, schools, and workplaces. Providing support for nursing education and recruitment is the key to filling these vacant positions and helping Americans begin well-paid and rewarding careers in healthcare. Moreover, plans to address the nursing shortage must not be shortsighted, as the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistic project that 587,000 new nursing positions will become available by 2016. Fortunately, the Title VIII programs are structured to address the educational, recruitment, and retention needs of the nursing workforce, yet additional funding is necessary to reverse the current and future shortages.

The Title VIII programs are a proven solution to nursing shortages when provided with adequate funding. These programs support the education of registered nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, nurse faculty, and nurse researchers. However, over the last three years, relatively flat funding for Title VIII has significantly decreased the purchasing power of the programs. In FY 2006, the programs supported 91,189 nurses and nursing students. In the following year, 71,729 nurses and nursing students were supported representing a 21% decline in the programs' purchasing power (In FY 2007 and 2008, the programs received \$149.68 million). In FY 2008, the number of grantees supported dropped by 28% despite the \$6.37 million increase in total appropriations and only supported 51,657 nurses and nursing students. Rising educational costs, inflation, and the cost to administer the programs has limited the programs' effectiveness.

Congress must invest more in the nursing workforce crisis because it is impacting the quality and safety of our healthcare system. The shortage is expected to place healthcare delivery in further jeopardy as the baby boomer population ages, medical technology advances, and the need for health care grows. Now is the time to invest in nursing. Your support for \$215 million in FY 2010 funding for Nursing Workforce Development programs will make a real difference in the lives of healthcare consumers, nurses, and the teachers committed to educating the nursing workforce's next generation.

Sincerely