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March 1, 2005

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senate
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA), I would like to express our support for your bill, the Allied Health Reinvestment Act. We believe this is an excellent first step towards addressing the national shortage of allied health professionals.

The AHA represents nearly 5,000 hospitals, health systems, networks, and other health care provider members.

Hospitals and health care facilities across America are experiencing a critical shortage of allied health professionals, including occupational and physical therapists, clinical laboratory technologists, imaging technicians, pharmacy technicians, and radiology technologists, to name a few. The combined pressures of an aging population, financial constraints, and declining enrollments in health professions programs have created critical shortages of all varieties of health care professionals. Results from a recent AHA workforce survey indicate that a large share of positions remain vacant in hospitals throughout the country. Hospitals reported vacancy rates ranging from 12 to 15 percent among imaging technicians, pharmacists, and many other allied health care positions.

Today's shortage is expected to worsen over the next 20 years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that from 1998 – 2008, our country will need a total of 93,000 new professionals in clinical laboratory science. According to the AHA workforce survey results, hospitals see the workforce shortage as contributing to Emergency Department diversions, reduced number of staffed beds, and increased patient wait times.

Your bill, the Allied Health Reinvestment Act, is designed to help alleviate the shortage of allied health professionals by providing incentives for young people to enter and complete allied health care training. Included in the measure are recruitment grants, provisions to strengthen recruitment, retention and practice, and incentives to promote racial and ethnic diversity in allied health professions.



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Helping alleviate the critical shortage of allied health care professionals is of vital importance to health care providers and the patients they serve. We hope Congress will recognize the significance of investing in this critical area of need. We applaud your effort and pledge to work with you to increase federal support to address the shortage of allied health professionals.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack

Executive Vice President