

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2006

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are writing in support of a \$175 million funding level for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs in the FY 2007 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. These programs, contained in Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act, are the primary means for supporting a sufficient nursing workforce.

The United States is currently in the midst of a critical nursing shortage, which began in 1999. The Department of Health and Human Services' own "Budget in Brief" document for FY2007 noted that the U.S. is expected to face a nursing shortage of 29 percent by 2020. We must take action now to meet both our current need for nurses and also prepare for future needs. Today's funding for nursing education and recruitment is roughly one-quarter of the appropriations provided in 1974.

This unprecedented shortage threatens our ability to treat today's patients and undermines homeland security efforts. Studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine and the Journal of the American Medical Association have shown that the nursing shortage is contributing to preventable health care complications. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations has reported that the shortage of nurses factors in nearly a quarter of all unexpected incidents that kill or injure hospitalized patients.

Nurses are also critical to efforts to treat U.S. military personnel as well as to prepare for and respond to domestic threats. There are currently more than 19,000 RNs providing care through the military reserves. The GAO reports that nursing shortages are complicating efforts at the state and local level to implement terrorism preparedness efforts.

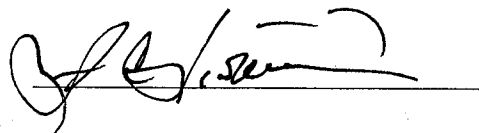
Federal investment in Title VIII programs will ensure that qualified applicants are not turned away from schools of nursing by providing financial support for programs and the creation of more nurse faculty. Furthermore, it will enable thousands of nursing students to participate in the Nurse Education Loan Repayment Program and the Nursing Scholarship Program. These newly trained nurses will, in turn, provide critical services to underserved areas.

Now is the time to reinvest in nursing. Your support for a total of at least \$175 million in FY 2007 funding for Nursing Workforce Development is vital to maintaining and improving the health of our nation.

Sincerely,



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