

**Testimony Prepared for the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
& National Institutes of Health (NIH)
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**Investing in the Nation's Health by Supporting our Current and Future Nursing
Workforce**

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), we would like to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding leadership and support for nursing education, the nursing profession, and nursing research. As the national voice for academic nursing, AACN represents more than 890 schools of nursing at private and public universities across the country, who educate more than 570,000 students and employ more than 58,000 faculty.¹ Collectively, these institutions graduate registered nurses (RNs), advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), educators, researchers, and frontline providers. Given ongoing nursing shortages and the growing demand for healthcare, especially in rural areas, enhanced investment in our nursing workforce and research programs is crucial. AACN strongly urges your support of at least **\$610 million for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs** (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.]) administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and at least **\$215 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)** within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-ED) appropriations bill. Given previous grant cancellations and efforts to reorganize programs within the Department of Health and Human Services, AACN encourages the Subcommittee to maintain and prioritize these effective nursing education, workforce, and research programs to ensure that all Americans have access to the high-quality care provided by nurses.

Landscape Overview: Nursing Workforce Demand Continues to Grow

Nurses comprise the largest sector of the healthcare workforce, with more than five million RNs and APRNs, which include Nurse Practitioners, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, Certified Nurse-Midwives, and Clinical Nurse Specialists.² From the classrooms to the frontlines, we know first-hand how critical a well-educated nursing workforce is to providing high-quality healthcare. For example, nurses with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree have demonstrated abilities that benefit patients and other members of the care team. BSN-prepared nurses are linked to an increased survival rate from cardiac arrest,³ lower inpatient

¹ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2026). Who We Are. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/about-aacn>

² National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2026). Active RN Licenses: A profile of nursing licensure in the U.S. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncsbn.org/nursing-regulation/national-nursing-database/licensure-statistics/active-rn-licenses.page>

³ Harrison, J.M., Aiken, L.H., Sloane, D.M., Brooks-Carthon, J.M., Merchant, R.M., Berg, R.A., & McHugh, M.D. (2019, July). In hospitals with more nurses who have baccalaureate degrees, better outcomes for patients after cardiac arrest. *Health Affairs*, 38(7), 1087- 1094. DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05064.



mortality in hospitals,⁴ and shorter hospital stays.⁵ Further, the need for nurses with baccalaureate and advanced preparation is expected to intensify as the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the demand for RNs will increase by 5% through 2034,⁶ and by 35% for certain APRN roles.⁷ This amounts to approximately 189,100 job openings for RNs⁸ and 32,700 job openings for APRNs⁹ every year for the next decade. Strong federal investment is essential to our ability to meet this demand.

Investments in Nursing Education: Support a Stronger Nursing Workforce

The Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs address all aspects of nursing demand, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention. In fact, each Title VIII Program provides a unique contribution to keeping the nation healthy. For example, the Advanced Nursing Education (ANE) Program helps increase the number of APRNs in the primary care workforce, including support for more than 8,000 students in Academic Year (AY) 2022-2023 alone.¹⁰ Historically, we have seen more than 6,900 APRNs graduate from ANE-supported programs and enter the workforce from AY 2017 through 2022, many of whom completed their education in rural and medically underserved communities.¹¹ In the same timeframe, the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) supported 2,746 nursing students preparing to serve as future nurse faculty.¹² AACN's latest annual survey found that enrollment in PhD nursing programs, which are crucial for preparing future nurse educators, declined for the 11th consecutive year, with a 3.05% decrease (127 students) from 2024 to 2025.¹³ Additionally, AACN's most recent survey data found a faculty vacancy rate of 7.2% or 1,588 full-time vacancies across the country.¹⁴ Given these realities and the direct impact that they have on our schools' ability to meet nursing workforce demand, NFLP grant cancellations in FY 2025 were especially concerning.

⁴ Porat-Dahlerbruch, J., Aiken, L. H., Lasater, K. B., Sloane, D. M., & McHugh, M. D. (2022, March). Variations in nursing baccalaureate education and 30-day inpatient surgical mortality. *Nursing Outlook*, 70(2), 300-308. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(21\)00232-3/abstract](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(21)00232-3/abstract)

⁵ Lasater, K. B., Sloane, D. M., McHugh, M. D., Porat-Dahlerbruch, J., & Aiken, L. H. (2021). Changes in proportion of bachelor's nurses associated with improvements in patients outcomes. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 44(5), 787-795. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8440404/>

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2026). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

⁷ Occupational Outlook Handbook- Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm>

⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2026). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

⁹ Occupational Outlook Handbook- Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm>

¹⁰ Health Resources and Services Administration. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Pages 143-146. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20250308232021/https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2025.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Health Resources and Services Administration. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Pages 154-156. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20250308232021/https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2025.pdf>

¹³ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2026). Schools of Nursing See Enrollment Increases Across Most Program Levels, Signaling Strong Interest in Nursing Careers. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/news-data/all-news/article/schools-of-nursing-see-enrollment-increases-across-most-program-levels-signaling-strong-interest-in-nursing-careers-1480>

¹⁴ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2025). Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2025-2026. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Reports/Faculty-Vacancy-Report-2025.pdf>

As we focus on national nursing needs and strengthening the healthcare workforce, Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention (NEPQR) Programs, “aim to increase the number of nursing students exposed to meaningful clinical experiences and training in medically underserved and rural communities, who will then be more likely to choose to work in these settings upon graduation.”¹⁵ In AY 2022-2023, NEPQR Programs prepared 10,342 nursing students and nurses, ultimately helping to improve access to care and increase nurse retention.¹⁶ To ensure the sufficiency of the nursing workforce today and in the future, AACN requests **at least \$610 million for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs in FY 2027**. Congress should invest in the proven success of our Title VIII Programs now more than ever, particularly as the profession recovers from FY 2025 grant cancellations and as the Department of Education begins implementing severe limitations to federal loan access for post-baccalaureate nursing students.¹⁷

From Research to Reality: Nursing Science Protects Americans’ Health

AACN recognizes that scientific research and discovery are the foundation on which nursing practice is built and is essential to advancing evidence-based interventions, informing policy, and sustaining the health of the nation. To further this vital work, we are requesting **at least \$215 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) in FY 2027**. As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at NIH, NINR is integral to improving care and is on the cutting edge of new innovations that impact how nurses are educated and practice.

It is through NINR funding that nurse scientists, often working collaboratively with other health professionals, are generating groundbreaking findings and leading translational research. A few examples of the transformational work that NINR has supported include nurse scientists developing a transitional care model for early discharges of low birthweight infants, improving infant health and saving approximately \$18,560 per infant in hospital and physician costs.¹⁸ NINR has also funded research leading to the development of a patented wearable device that continuously and objectively monitors respiratory symptoms via a smartphone app to improve asthma self-management.¹⁹ In September 2024, NINR established the NINR AI & Data Science Working Group, which is advancing the use of artificial intelligence in nursing science to drive data-informed solutions that improve care and outcomes.²⁰

According to a 2019 study, "NINR funds 80% of training grants and >70% of Center grants, which support the education and infrastructure for research, respectively, at Schools of

¹⁵ Health Resources and Services Administration. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Pages 151-153. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20250308232021/https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2025.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ U.S Department of Education. Reimagining and Improving Student Education [Docket ID ED-2025-OPE-0944]. Retrieved from: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/01/2026-08556/reimagining-and-improving-student-education-federal-student-loan-program-final-regulations>

¹⁸ Cantelon, P. L. (2010, September). National Institute of Nursing Research, NINR, Bringing Science to Life. Pages 87-88. Retrieved from: https://www.ninr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/NINR_History_Book_508.pdf

¹⁹ The National Institute of Nursing Research. Development of an Automated Device for Asthma Monitoring. Retrieved from: <https://www.ninr.nih.gov/newsandevents/featured-research/development-automated-device-asthma-monitoring>

²⁰ The National Institute of Nursing Research. Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Data Science Working Group: Recommendations to the NACNR. (2025). Retrieved from: https://www.ninr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/docs/NINR%20AI%20Working%20Group_Council%20Presentation_May%202025_508c.pdf



Nursing.”²¹ Yet, a separate study found that, “NINR funding is inadequate relative to the number of doctoral programs in nursing,” and that the NINR budget would need to “increase at least fivefold” to “adequately fund nursing science.”²² Nurse scientists and researchers at NINR and across NIH are working collaboratively with others, breaking down silos, serving as faculty to future nurses, and informing best practices, all while contributing to a stronger healthcare system through patient-centered care across the lifespan.

Supporting the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR is critical to sustaining a strong nursing workforce and addressing ongoing nursing shortages. Therefore, AACN respectfully requests **at least \$610 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs** and **at least \$215 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research** in FY 2027. Together, we can ensure that such strategic investments for current and future nurses will yield immeasurable benefits by helping promote innovation and improving the health of all Americans.

²¹ Schnall, R. (2019). National Institute of Health (NIH) funding patterns in Schools of Nursing: Who is funding nursing science research and who is conducting research at Schools of Nursing? *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 36(1), 34-41. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755722319301164?via=ihub#>

²² Kiely, D. P. & Wysocki, A. B. (2020). Federal funding of nursing research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH): 1993 to 2017. *Nursing Outlook*, 68(3), 270-283. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S002965541930315X>