

**Statement by the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition on FY 2024
Appropriations Submitted for the Record to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies – May 18, 2023**

The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) is an alliance of more than 90 national organizations representing schools, students, health professionals, and communities dedicated to ensuring that the health workforce is trained to meet the varied needs of our diverse population. Together, the members of HPNEC advocate for continued support for the health professions and nursing workforce development programs authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). **For fiscal year (FY) 2024, HPNEC encourages the subcommittee to adopt at least \$1.51 billion for HRSA Titles VII and VIII programs.**

Health provider shortages have led to widening gaps in care for our most vulnerable patients, including an aging population that requires more health care services. HRSA estimates that 99 million Americans currently live in federally designated primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), 70 million live in dental health HPSAs, and 160 million live in mental health HPSAs. At least 17,000 primary care practitioners, 12,000 dental health practitioners, and 8,000 mental health practitioners are needed to serve these areas.

The HRSA Title VII and VIII programs successfully recruit, train, and support physicians, physician assistants, nurses, geriatricians, mental health providers, public health practitioners, and other frontline health care workers. These programs educate current and future providers, train providers in underserved areas, and advance new delivery systems and interprofessional and integrated models of care. Additional investment is needed in the Title VII and Title VIII programs to ensure that our health workforce is equipped to serve the nation's ever-growing needs and prepared for the health care demands of tomorrow.

Diversity Pathway Programs –The Title VII and Title VIII programs play a crucial role in improving the diversity of the health workforce and connecting students from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds to health careers by supporting recruitment, education, training, and mentorship opportunities.

Diversity programs include the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), Centers of Excellence (COE), Faculty Loan Repayment, Nursing Workforce Diversity, and Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS). Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of such pathway programs in strengthening students' academic records, improving test scores, and helping disadvantaged students pursue careers in the health professions. Title VII diversity programs reached more than 11,000 students in the 2021-2022 academic year (AY), with 56% of HCOP graduates and 49% of COE graduates accepted into a health professions training program, and 54% of SDS alumni working in medically underserved communities.

Title VIII's Nursing Workforce Diversity Program increases nursing education opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds through stipends, scholarships, and pre-entry and advanced education preparation. In AY 2021-2022, the program supported nearly 11,000 students, all of whom were from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Primary Care Workforce – The Primary Care Medicine Programs fortify our nation’s primary care workforce by training future clinicians, teachers, and researchers who practice as general pediatricians, general internists, family medicine practitioners, and physician assistants through the following programs: Primary Care Training and Enhancement (PCTE) and Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry Career Development. The Primary Care programs encourage health professionals to work in underserved areas. In AY 2021-2022, 32% of PCTE programs were in medically underserved communities.

The Medical Student Education program, which supports the health care workforce by expanding training for medical students to become primary care clinicians, targets higher education institutions in states with the highest primary care workforce shortages. Through grants, the program develops partnerships among institutions, federally recognized tribes, and community-based organizations to train medical students to provide care that improves health outcomes for those living on tribal reservations or in rural and underserved communities. In AY 2021-2022, awardees of this program trained 2,553 students and provided nearly 5,000 clinical training experiences, with 68% of sites in medically underserved or rural communities.

Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Linkages – By assessing the needs of the local communities they serve, Title VII programs can fill gaps in the workforce and increase access to care for all populations. The programs emphasize interprofessional education and training, bringing together knowledge and skills across disciplines to provide effective, efficient, and coordinated care.

Programs such as Graduate Psychology Education (GPE); Opioid Workforce Enhancement Program; Mental and Behavioral Health, and Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET), respond to changing delivery systems and models of care, and address emerging health issues in their communities. The BHWET and Mental and Behavioral Health programs, which include GPE, provides training to expand access to mental and behavioral health services for vulnerable and underserved populations. In AY 2021-2022, BHWET grantees trained over 4,000 behavioral health professionals, and GPE grantees trained nearly 400 graduate-level students, many of whom continued to work in medically underserved communities and/or primary care settings after graduation.

Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) support the recruitment and training of future physicians in rural areas, respond to local health needs, and serve as a crucial link between academic training programs and community-based outreach programs. In AY 2021-2022, AHECs supported over 280,000 pathway program participants, provided over 28,000 clinical training rotations for health professions trainees, 70% of which were in underserved communities.

Title VII Geriatric Workforce programs integrate geriatrics and primary care to provide coordinated and comprehensive care for older adults. These programs offer training across the provider continuum, focusing on interprofessional and team-based care and academic community partnerships to address gaps in health care for older adults. To advance the training of the current workforce, the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) provided 1,889 unique

continuing education courses to over 500,000 health care professionals, students, patients, and caregivers in AY 2021-2022, including 673 courses on dementia-related diseases.

Nursing Workforce Development – Title VIII nursing workforce development programs provide federal support to address all aspects of nursing workforce demands, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention, with a focus on rural and medically underserved communities. These programs include Advanced Nursing Education; Nursing Workforce Diversity; Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention; NURSE Corps; and Nurse Faculty Loan Program. In AY 2021-2022, the Title VIII Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) program supported nearly 4,000 nursing students and partnered with clinical training sites in primary care, underserved communities and/or rural settings. These grantees are part of the more than 8,800 nursing students and practitioners who are supported through the broader Advanced Nursing Education programs.

Oral Health – The Primary Care Dentistry program invests in expanding programs in primary dental care for pediatric, public health, and general dentistry. The Pre- and Post-doctoral Training, Residency Training, Faculty Development, and Faculty Loan Repayment programs encourage integrating dentistry into primary care.

Public Health – Public Health Workforce Development programs support education and training in public health and preventive medicine through different initiatives, including the only funding for physicians to work in state and local health departments. In AY 2021-2022, the program's students accumulated nearly 50,000 contact hours in underserved communities.

Workforce Information and Analysis – The Workforce Information and Analysis program provides funding for the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis as well as grants to nine Health Workforce Research Centers across the country that perform and disseminate research and data analysis on health workforce issues of national importance.

Supporting the Mental Health of the Health Professions Workforce – The Supporting the Mental Health of the Health Professions Workforce program provides funding to establish or expand evidence-based programs that promote wellness and well-being among health care workers and staff on the front lines of the pandemic response.

While HPNEC's members acknowledge the increasing demands and fiscal challenges facing appropriators, funding for HRSA's workforce development programs is critical in bolstering a workforce that can respond to future health threats and challenges facing all Americans. Therefore, HPNEC encourages the subcommittee to provide at least \$1.51 billion in the FY 2024 appropriations bill for HRSA's Title VII and VIII programs to continue the nation's investment in our health workforce.