



June 20, 2019

Denise Sorrell  
SDS Project Officer  
Division of Health Careers and Financial Support  
Bureau of Health Workforce  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 15N78  
Rockville, Maryland 20857

**Re: Proposed Changes to the Scholarships to Disadvantaged Students Program (84 FR 23571)**

Dear Ms. Sorrell,

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) offers the following comments on *Proposed Changes to the Scholarships to Disadvantaged Students Program (84 FR 23571), Section 1*.

AACN is the national voice for academic nursing, representing 825 schools of nursing, 45,000 faculty, and over 500,000 students. The association has a vested interest in advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity within the nursing student population to ensure that future nurses are reflective of the communities they will serve. AACN prioritizes sound federal policy that removes barriers to higher education and supports accessibility for students from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds.

As healthcare systems seek innovative approaches to meet the nation's growing demand for accessible and affordable care, academic nursing is developing new education models designed to prepare clinicians to thrive in a variety of care settings.<sup>1</sup> AACN developed a strategic plan for interprofessional education, which includes leading educational innovation to promote team-based health care. AACN strongly supports interprofessional collaboration and is a founding member of the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC), which promotes substantive learning experiences that prepare future health professionals for enhanced team-based care and improved population health outcomes. Furthermore, AACN strongly supports the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) in its initiative to be inclusive of all health professionals.

AACN recognizes that nursing schools receive at least 16 percent of the Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) Program funding, as required by Section 740(a) of the Public Health Service Act. We also note that the Institute of Medicine's *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* report identified a need to increase the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree to 80 percent by 2020.<sup>2</sup> Although Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs support many nursing scholarships, Title VIII does not fund Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs. Therefore, the SDS program, which does support RN to BSN programs, should **provide funding to nursing**

---

<sup>1</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. *Advancing Healthcare Transformation: A New Era for Academic Nursing*. 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/Publications/AACN-New-Era-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Medicine. *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health Report Recommendations*. 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing/Future%20of%20Nursing%202010%20Recommendations.pdf>

**schools beyond the 16 percent statutory floor.** SDS grants are critical to ensure that nursing programs are accessible to students in need of financial aid and to students that come from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds. HRSA has historically distributed approximately 50 percent of these monies to nursing programs in the most vulnerable areas, and we would expect HRSA to continue this policy in the absence of other qualified applications.

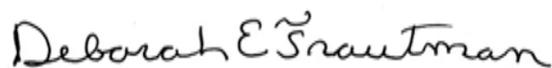
As national trends in the supply and demand of health professionals fluctuate, AACN recognizes the need for continuous assessments to combat workforce shortages across health care. As HRSA reviews funding distributions for FY2020, AACN recommends the agency consider the report findings by the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, which conclude that several states across the U.S. are projected to have a nursing shortage in 2030.

According to HRSA's *Supply of and Demand Projections of the Nursing Workforce: 2014 and 2030*, the nation is facing substantial geographic disparities in the supply of RNs. In identifying each state's 2030 supply and demand projections, the report found a deficit of RNs in seven states (Alaska, California, Georgia, New Jersey, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas), with a demand shortage variation ranging from 2 percent to 23 percent.<sup>3</sup> The nursing workforce shortage projections represent the inequitable distribution of health care, preventing many communities from accessing quality care.

AACN strongly supports HRSA's distribution of SDS funding to eligible recipients in areas of severe shortage and recommends HRSA increase the scholarship award amount designated to nursing schools. Nursing schools in shortage areas, such as South Dakota, depend on these scholarships to recruit and retain students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, AACN requests that HRSA prioritize program funding for nursing schools and especially those located in the seven states projected to expect shortages.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments in response to the *Proposed Changes to the Scholarships to Disadvantaged Students Program (84 FR 23571)*. Please consider AACN an ally to HRSA in support of the nursing workforce, which remains the nation's largest group of healthcare providers. If our organization can be of any assistance, please contact AACN's Director of Policy, Colleen Leners at [cleners@aacnnursing.org](mailto:cleners@aacnnursing.org).

Sincerely,



Deborah E. Trautman, PhD, RN, FAAN  
President and Chief Executive Officer

---

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis. 2017. *National and Regional Supply and Demand Projections of the Nursing Workforce: 2014-2030*. Rockville, Maryland. Retrieved from [https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhwh/nchwa/projections/NCHWA\\_HRSA\\_Nursing\\_Report.pdf](https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhwh/nchwa/projections/NCHWA_HRSA_Nursing_Report.pdf)