



February 11, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McCarthy, and Leader McConnell,

With communities across the country combating the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and as we continue vaccine distribution and administration efforts, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recognizes the essential role that nursing education plays in preparing our current and future healthcare providers. As the voice of academic nursing, AACN represents over 840 member schools of nursing at private and public universities. Our institutions educate more than 560,000 baccalaureate, graduate, and post-graduate students, and employ more than 52,000 faculty members who are scientists, educators, and practitioners. While AACN members continue to stand on the frontlines of this public health challenge, we recognize that additional work must be done.

As Congress continues its work on the coronavirus relief package, AACN strongly urges the support of existing programs, such as Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs, National Institutes of Health, and the National Institute of Nursing Research, as well as other top priorities including:

- **Include the Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN) Act (H.R. 851/S. 246):** AACN strongly encourages Congress to recognize the vital role of nursing education by including the FAAN Act in the coronavirus relief package. The FAAN Act invests \$1 billion into schools of nursing to address immediate infrastructure support, which is critically important as our schools significantly expand their remote/distance learning capabilities and safety protocols, while outlining long-term emergency preparedness strategies. Demand for nurses is only expected to grow, especially as they continue to combat this pandemic and address the healthcare needs of all communities, including rural and underserved areas. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projected registered nurse (RN) workforce demand is expected to increase 7% by 2029, representing a call for an additional 221,900 nurses<sup>1</sup> and demand for advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) is expected to grow by 45%.<sup>2</sup> In the past, the Congress has signaled that investment in healthcare education is imperative. The FAAN Act will assist in providing that foundational support in the current crisis and for the public health issues yet to come.
- **Support Schools of Nursing, Deans, Faculty, and Students in National Plans to Combat COVID-19 with Enhanced Public Health Infrastructure:** As coronavirus relief efforts coalesce

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). 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>

and Congress considers broad expansion of our nation's public health workforce, it is crucial to include our nursing schools, faculty, and students as they represent an underutilized, highly educated, and qualified workforce ready to assist with vaccine administration and with successful implementation of a national plan. Our members are volunteering their time as part of the Medical Reserve Corps, as supervisors for students, as trackers, tracers, and testers, and as individuals confronting hesitancy by publicly receiving their doses of the vaccine. With continuing hospitalizations and positive COVID-19 cases, having our schools, faculty, and students assist with vaccination efforts allows our nation's RNs and APRNs to dedicate their efforts to what they do best - caring for patients in need.

- **Safeguard and Enhance Federal Student Loans and Aid for Nurses and Nursing Students:** Safeguarding federal student loans and aid so they remain uninterrupted is imperative. AACN recognizes that additional aid to existing federal scholarship and loan repayment programs is necessary. One way to enhance these efforts is through the inclusion of the Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act (S. 54), a bipartisan bill that would invest \$1 billion in the Nurse Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs and \$5 billion in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), as well as create a National Health Service Corps Emergency Service demonstration project. These additional measures, as we work to recruit future nurses through the scholarship programs and support nurses in loan repayment, will ensure that healthcare providers continue to serve our rural and underserved communities; those especially impacted by the pandemic.
- **Guarantee the Safety and Health of Nurses and Nursing Students:** It is imperative that the safety of the public, nurses, and nursing students remains at the forefront of conversations surrounding coronavirus relief legislation. We urge you to continue including funding to ensure that nursing educators and students are able to access personal protective equipment (PPE), have health worker protections, mental health resources, and institute other safety measures as they put their health at risk to respond to COVID-19.

AACN, our members, and our students remain committed to ensuring that our nation is healthy and strong throughout the duration of this unprecedented pandemic. We commend Congress for your ongoing efforts and encourage you to include the above priorities, which will deeply benefit nursing education, practice, and patient care as we face current and future public health challenges. We look forward to working with you during this critical time. Should you have any questions, please contact Rachel Stevenson, AACN's Director of Government Affairs, at [rstevenson@aacnnursing.org](mailto:rstevenson@aacnnursing.org), or 202-463-6930 ext. 271.

Sincerely,



Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Board Chair



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

CC:

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer  
House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn  
House Minority Whip Steve Scalise

Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin  
Senate Minority Whip John Thune  
Chairwoman Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee  
Ranking Member Richard Burr, Senate HELP Committee  
Chairman Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Vice Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Chairwoman Patty Murray, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Ranking Member Roy Blunt, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
Ranking Member, Cathy McMorris Rodgers, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member, Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee  
Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Ranking Member Tom Cole, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies