

March 8, 2021

Miguel Cardona
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), we congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of the Education and welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff.

Nurses and nursing students are currently serving on the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19 by educating, tracing, testing, and vaccinating our communities. We at AACN have a vested interest in supporting this work, as our 840 member institutions are preparing over 560,000 nursing students to enter the workforce.

As the collective voice for academic nursing, AACN serves as the catalyst for excellence and innovation in nursing education, research, and practice, especially in rural and underserved communities. Our 2021-2022 Federal Policy Agenda reflects our core policy values of sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity. We believe these principles are essential for strengthening and advancing our nation's health.

Ensuring that students from all backgrounds have access to higher education is a priority that drives innovation, fosters the economy, and achieves the goal of an educated citizenry. AACN supports the recruitment of culturally and economically diverse individuals to the higher education community using holistic admissions, which positively impacts the classroom and professional practice environments.

Affordable higher education remains a challenge for students and families across the country. Federal and private loans are becoming the norm to finance undergraduate and graduate degrees. At the same time, academic institutions are asked to do more with less, which significantly impacts professional programs like nursing that have additional clinical costs. Supporting efforts that keep education affordable is a pressing national priority, and AACN works with coalitions that support increasing funding for Pell grants that support students in need. Secretary Cardona, with your experience as a public-school educator and administrator, you understand the need for these funding sources for underserved students to attend college.

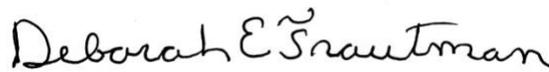
To help meet student needs and other department priorities, AACN can connect you with nursing leaders, researchers, and policy experts who offer critical insights. Consider AACN and our member schools of nursing as a trusted resource as you work toward re-opening schools across the country.

We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss how we can assist in your work. If we can be of any assistance, please contact AACN by reaching out to Dr. Colleen Leners, Director of Policy at cleners@aacnursing.org, or Rachel Stevenson, Director of Government Affairs at rstevenson@aacnursing.org.

Sincerely,



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



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

ADVANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NURSING