

**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)**

**June 10, 2021**

*Submitted by: Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, RN, FAAN, Board Chair  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing*

**Strengthening the Current and Future Nursing Workforce**

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), we want to thank the Subcommittee for its leadership and continued support of nursing education, the nursing profession, and nursing research, especially during this unprecedented time. As the national voice for academic nursing, AACN represents nearly 840 schools of nursing at private and public universities, who educate more than 580,000 students and employ more than 52,000 faculty.<sup>1</sup> Collectively, these institutions play a critical role in protecting the health of our nation by graduating registered nurses (RN), advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), educators, researchers, and other frontline providers. As we work to combat current public health challenges, such as COVID-19, and prepare for the future, ensuring a robust supply of nursing professionals requires a strong and sustained federal investment. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, AACN respectfully requests that you provide bold support of at least **\$530 million for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs** (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.] administered by HRSA and at least **\$199.755 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), which was included in the President's FY 2022 Budget.**

**The Growing Nursing Workforce Demand**

Nurses comprise the largest sector of the healthcare workforce with more than four million RNs and APRNs, which include Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs).<sup>2</sup> Nurse educators, students, and practitioners are leaders within their institutions and communities; many of whom are also serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Even prior to COVID-19, our nation was in need of additional nurses. This demand is only expected to grow as we continue to combat the pandemic and address the healthcare needs of all patients, including those in rural and underserved areas. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' outlook for RN workforce demand projected an increase of 7% by 2029, representing the need for an additional 221,900 jobs.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the need for most APRNs is expected to grow by

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<sup>1</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021) Who We Are. Retrieved from:

<https://www.aacnnursing.org/About-AACN/Who-We-Are>

<sup>2</sup> National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2021). Active RN Licenses: A profile of nursing licensure in the U.S. as of April 23, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncsbn.org/6161.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

45%.<sup>4</sup> This increasing demand in the nursing workforce can be attributed to several factors such as an aging population, nursing retirements, and an increase in workplace stress.<sup>5</sup> Bold investments in Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR would help prepare a highly educated nursing workforce and strengthen the foundation of nursing science, not only as we confront existing health challenges, but as we provide tomorrow's equitable and innovative healthcare solutions.

### **Nursing Workforce Investments: Sustaining Education to Secure a Strong Nursing Workforce**

Our ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19 have made it abundantly clear that a well-educated nursing workforce is essential. For over fifty years, Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs have been a catalyst for strengthening nursing education at all levels, from entry-level preparation through graduate study. Through grants, scholarships, and loan repayment programs, Title VIII federal investments positively impact the profession's ability to serve America's patients in all areas, bolster diversity within the workforce, and increase the number of nurses, including those at the forefront of public health emergencies and caring for our aging population.

Each Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Program provides a unique and crucial mission to support nursing education and the profession. For example, the Advanced Nursing Education (ANE) programs help increase the number of APRNs in the primary care workforce and supported more than 8,200 students in Academic Year 2019-2020 alone.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) awarded 45 grants to schools that supported 2,270 graduate nursing students in Academic Year 2019-2020.<sup>7</sup> According to AACN's Annual Survey, student enrollment in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs increased by 5.6% in 2020.<sup>8</sup> While this heightened interest in nursing education is promising news, we need to ensure these students have ample nursing faculty to guide them through their clinical and didactic education and prepare them to respond to our nation's ever-changing healthcare environment.

As we address social determinants of health and work to build an equitable healthcare system for all patients, it is imperative that we recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds to the nursing profession. Increasing diversity in the profession will not only create lifelong career pathways, but will also improve care quality and access to population-centered care. The Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) program serves as a glowing example of a successful Title

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). 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>

<sup>5</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2020) Fact Sheet: Nursing Shortage. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Factsheets/Nursing-Shortage-Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2022 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Pages 153-155. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2022.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2022 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Page 167. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2022.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021). Student Enrollment Surged in U.S. Schools of Nursing in 2020 Despite Challenges Presented by the Pandemic. Retrieved from <https://www.aacnursing.org/News-Information/Press-Releases/View/ArticleId/24802/2020-survey-data-student-enrollment%20%20%20%20%20>

VIII initiative that accomplishes this goal. In fact, in Academic Year 2019-2020, the NWD program awarded grants supporting 11,620 nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>9</sup> The recruitment of underrepresented racial and ethnic individuals and those from economically diverse backgrounds to nursing positively impacts the classroom, professional practice environments, and ultimately patients.

As such, to ensure the stability of our nursing workforce now and in the future, we request at least **\$530 million for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs.**

### **From Research to Reality: Nursing Science Protects Americans' Health**

AACN recognizes how scientific research and discovery is 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. As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at NIH, NINR plays a fundamental role in improving care and is on the cutting edge of new innovations impacting how nurses are educated and how they practice. In fact, 80% of research-focused educational training grants at nursing schools are funded by NINR.<sup>10</sup> Through these grants and others, nurse scientists, often working collaboratively with other health professionals, are generating and translating impactful new research in areas such as big data and data science, precision health, and genomics.<sup>11</sup> Despite the critical research these grants support, NINR was only able to fund 8.9% of grant applications in 2017, due to insufficient funding.<sup>12</sup> This is the lowest research project grant (RPG) success rate among all NIH institutes and centers, and is significantly lower than the overall NIH RPG success rate of 18.7%.<sup>13</sup> To further this vital work, we are requesting a total of at least **\$199.755 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research.**

From the classroom to the frontlines, nurses and nursing students are integral members of the healthcare team. Strong investments in Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR have a direct impact on sustaining pathways into nursing and patient access to high-quality, evidence-based care in all communities across the nation. During these unprecedented times, AACN respectfully requests bold support in FY 2022 of at least **\$530 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs** and at least **\$199.755 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research.** Together, we can ensure that such investments promote innovation and improve health and healthcare in America.

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2022 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Page 159. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2022.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Schnall, R. (2020) 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#>

<sup>11</sup> National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Nursing Research. The NINR Strategic Plan: Advancing Science, Improving Lives. Retrieved from: [https://www.ninr.nih.gov/sites/www.ninr.nih.gov/files/NINR\\_StratPlan2016\\_reduced.pdf](https://www.ninr.nih.gov/sites/www.ninr.nih.gov/files/NINR_StratPlan2016_reduced.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Federal Funding of Nursing Research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH): 1993-2017 Kiely, Daniel P. et al. (2019) Page 9. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(19\)30315-X/addons](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(19)30315-X/addons)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid