



March 6, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representative
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representative
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Baldwin and Aderholt and Ranking Members Moore Capito and DeLauro:

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) appreciates the Subcommittee's steadfast support of nursing education and research, especially as our nursing schools, faculty, and students remain dedicated to meeting the health needs of our nation. As you consider and advance the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-ED) appropriations bill, AACN respectfully requests strengthened support for the nursing workforce by providing:

- **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]); and
- **At least \$210 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR).**

As the national voice for academic nursing, AACN represents 865 schools of nursing at public and private universities, who educate more than 565,000 students and employ more than 52,000 faculty. Collectively, these institutions graduate registered nurses (RN), advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), educators, researchers, scientists, and frontline providers. Our member schools are committed to preparing a highly educated nursing workforce, strengthening the foundation of nursing science, and advancing innovative and equitable solutions to meeting the nation's healthcare needs.

Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs

From the classrooms to the frontlines, we know first-hand how critical a well-educated nursing workforce is to providing high-quality health care. This need is only expected to intensify with the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting the demand for RNs to increase by 6% through 2031,

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representing the need for an additional 195,400 jobs.¹ Demand for certain APRNs (nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse-midwives) is expected to grow even more, by 40%.²

Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs, comprising the largest dedicated federal funding source for nursing, have consistently and continually built the supply and distribution of nurses. These programs strengthen nursing education at all levels, from entry-level preparation through graduate study. Through grants, scholarships, and loan repayment opportunities, these vital federal investments positively impact the profession's ability to serve America's patients across the country.

While the COVID-19 public health emergency is set to expire on May 11, 2023, we continue to see the impact the last few years have had on the viability of nursing schools and the pipeline of faculty and students. These impacts illustrate the need for enhanced federal investment in FY 2024. For example, in 2021, student enrollment in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs increased by 3.3%.³ Yet, this increase was 2.3% lower than 2020.⁴ Further, nursing schools saw enrollment decline in baccalaureate degree-completion programs and graduate programs at the master's and PhD levels.⁵ For the first time since 2001, enrollment in master's programs decreased by 3.8%, which translates to 5,766 fewer students enrolled in 2021 than in the previous year.⁶ Declines in graduate nursing programs are of great concern, as these programs help prepare individuals for critical roles in administration, teaching, research, informatics, and direct patient care. Enrollment declines coupled with more than 2,100 full-time faculty vacancies in baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country underscores how vital funding for nursing education is to support the healthcare needs of all communities, including those in rural and underserved areas.⁷

Educational pathways are just one piece of the puzzle. Strong and historic investments in the current nursing workforce are imperative, especially as we contend with an aging nursing workforce and the toll that the response to COVID-19 has had on the profession. In fact, the median age of RNs is now 52 years, with nurses aged 65 and older making up 19% of the workforce. More than one-fifth of all nurses reported they plan to retire from nursing over the next five years".⁸ Supporting Title VIII programs is essential to ensuring the nation can meet the current and future demand for nurses.

We recognize that each of the Title VIII programs, including the Advanced Nursing Education, Nursing Workforce Diversity, and Nurse Faculty Loan Programs, have unique and vital missions aimed at ensuring nursing care throughout all communities. By prioritizing funding for Title VIII programs, Congress can be proactive by helping bolster diversity within the profession, support

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). Occupational Outlook Handbook-Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). 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>.

³ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2022) Nursing Schools See Enrollment Increases in Entry-Level Programs, Signaling Strong Interest in Nursing Careers. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Press-Releases/View/ArticleId/25183/Nursing-Schools-See-Enrollment-Increases-in-Entry-Level-Programs>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2022). [Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions](https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Surveys-Data/2022-Faculty-Vacancy-Report.pdf). Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Surveys-Data/2022-Faculty-Vacancy-Report.pdf>

⁸ National Council of State Boards of Nursing and the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers (2021) The 2020 National Nursing Workforce Survey. Retrieved from: [https://www.journalofnursingregulation.com/article/S2155-8256\(21\)00027-2/fulltext](https://www.journalofnursingregulation.com/article/S2155-8256(21)00027-2/fulltext)

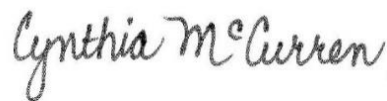
nursing students, prepare faculty needed to educate the next generation of nurses, and increase the number of nurses prepared to serve in a variety of capacities, including at the forefront of public health emergencies. As we contend with the nation's growing healthcare needs, the aging nursing workforce, and the needs of academic nursing to meet the current and future demand for nurses, now is the time for historic support for existing Title VIII programs. Therefore, we request at least \$530 million for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs in FY 2024.

National Institute of Nursing Research

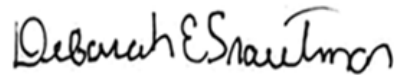
AACN recognizes that scientific research and discovery is the foundation on which nursing practice is built and is fundamental to advancing evidence-based interventions, informing policy, and sustaining the health of the nation. As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at NIH, the NINR is integral to improving care and is on the cutting edge of new innovations that impact how nurses are educated and how they practice. In fact, 80% of research-focused educational training grants at schools of nursing are funded by NINR.⁹ With this support, nurse scientists, often working collaboratively with other health professionals, are generating groundbreaking findings and leading translational research. The scope of this research encompasses a range of strategic imperatives such as health equity, social determinants of health, population health, health promotion, and new models of care. As such, we request at least \$210 million for NINR in FY 2024.

Enhanced support for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR is critical to sustaining a strong nursing workforce able to care for our nation's population. AACN appreciates the Subcommittee's consideration of these FY 2024 requests and looks forward to working with you as we continue to strengthen academic nursing and the nursing workforce. If AACN can be of any assistance, please contact AACN's Director of Government Affairs, Rachel Stevenson, at (202) 463-6930, ext. 271 or rstevenson@aacnnursing.org.

Sincerely,



Cynthia McCurren, PhD, RN
Board Chair



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

CC:

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray
Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chair Susan Collins
House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Kay Granger
Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries

⁹ Schnall, R. (2019). 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.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755722319301164?via=ihub#>

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