



**National League
for Nursing**

**Testimony Regarding Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations for the
Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs
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To: Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies,
Committee on Appropriations, US House of Representatives

As the oldest nursing organization in the United States, the NLN promotes excellence in nursing education to build a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the health of the nation and the global community. The League represents more than 1,200 nursing schools, 40,000 members, and 25 regional constituent leagues. **The NLN urges the subcommittee to fund the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Title VIII nursing workforce development programs at \$244 million in FY 2018.**

NURSING EDUCATION

The changing landscape of patient care, driven by greater consumer engagement, practice-driven technologies, and virtual health care, provides a unique context for teaching and learning. Teaching with and about emerging technology is the future of nursing education. Providing nursing care in a highly technological, connected work environment is the future of nursing practice (NLN 2015). Unfortunately, federal funding for nursing education is inconsistent with the health care reality facing our nation today.

For over 50 years, the Title VIII nursing workforce development programs have provided training for entry-level and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to improve the access to, and quality of, health care in underserved communities. Infrastructure development for all program levels is critical to advancing the science of nursing education. This will increase the pool of nurses and nurse educators. Insufficient investment in the nursing workforce is shortsighted and further jeopardizes access to and the quality of the nation's market-driven health care delivery system. Policies must be implemented, to develop accurate and replicable models

for projecting workforce capacity and to evaluate education, preparation, and workforce activities to increase retention in the nursing profession.

THE NURSE AND NURSE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

Health inequities, inflated costs, and poor health care outcomes are intensifying because of today's shortfall of appropriately prepared licensed vocational/practical nurses (LVNs/LPNs), registered nurses (RNs), advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and nurse faculty. A high quality-nursing workforce equals high quality care for the nation. With 4.8 million active, licensed RNs/LVNs/LPNs, nurses are the primary professionals delivering quality health care in the nation (NCSBN 2017). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the RN workforce is projected to grow by 16 percent from 2014 to 2024, resulting in 1,088,400 job openings due to growth and replacement needs. The BLS also estimates the LVN/LPN workforce will grow by 16.3 percent resulting in 322,200 job openings and the APRN workforce will grow by 31 percent with 93,600 job openings during the same period.

This increase is fueled by an expanded demand for health care services for our aging population; for patients with various chronic conditions, such as arthritis, dementia, diabetes, and obesity; and for staffing facilities that provide long-term rehabilitation for stroke and head injury patients and those that treat people with Alzheimer's. In addition, because many older people prefer to be treated at home or in residential care facilities, nurses will be in demand in those settings. The situation is further affected by the needed replacement of some 439,300 jobs vacated by RNs, 117,300 vacated by LPNs/LVNs, and 53,400 vacated by APRNs who will leave the profession and/or retire by 2024. The BLS projects a need of 19 percent more faculty members to meet the expected increase in demand. In addition, with 12,200 current faculty members expected to retire, 25,400 new nursing instructors will be needed by 2024 (BLS 2015).

The nursing shortage continues to outpace the level of resources allocated by various levels of government to help alleviate it. Funding for nursing education is inconsistent with the health care reality facing our

nation today. A strong nursing workforce is essential to a health policy that provides high-value care for every dollar invested in capacity building.

EQUALLY PRESSING IS LACK OF DIVERSITY

Diversity and quality health care are inseparable. Diversity signifies that each individual is unique and recognizes individual differences – race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other attributes. It encourages self-awareness and respect for all persons, embracing and celebrating the richness of each individual. It also encompasses organizational, institutional, and system-wide behaviors in nursing, nursing education, and health care (NLN 2016).

There is a great need for diversity in the nurse workforce, student population, and faculty in order for nursing to achieve excellent care for all. Diversity in nursing is essential to a market-driven health care system that understands and addresses cultural challenges and social determinants of health in our rapidly changing population. Our nation is enriched by cultural complexity – 37 percent of our population identify as racial and ethnic minorities. Yet diversity eludes the nursing student and nurse educator populations. Minorities only constitute 28 percent of the student population and males only 15 percent of pre-licensure RN students (NLN 2014). Workforce diversity is especially needed where research indicates that factors such as societal biases and stereotyping, communication barriers, limited cultural sensitivity and competence, and system and organizational determinants contribute to health care inequities.

TITLE VIII FEDERAL FUNDING REALITY

Today's undersupply of appropriately prepared nurses and nurse faculty, as well as the projected loss of experienced nurses over the next decade, does not bode well for our nation. The Title VIII nursing workforce development programs are a comprehensive system of capacity-building strategies that provide students and schools of nursing with grants to strengthen education programs, including faculty recruitment and retention

efforts, facility and equipment acquisition, clinical lab enhancements, loans, scholarships, and services that enable students to overcome obstacles to completing their nursing education programs. Information from HRSA's Title VIII programs listed below provides a perspective on current federal investments.

The **Advanced Nursing Education (ANE)** program supports infrastructure grants to schools of nursing for advanced practice programs preparing nurse-midwives, nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse administrators, nurse educators, public health nurses, or other advanced level nurses. In academic year 2014-2015, ANE program grantees trained 8,735 nursing students and produced 2,148 graduates. In addition, 30 percent of students trained were underrepresented minorities and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) grants increase educational opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (including racial and ethnic minorities underrepresented in nursing) through scholarship or stipend support, pre-entry preparation, and retention activities. In academic year 2014-2015, the number of nursing program students trained was 4,400.

Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention Grants (NEPQR) address the critical nursing shortage via projects to expand the nursing pipeline, promote career mobility, provide continuing education, and support retention. The NEPQR program funded the Veterans' Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) program and made awards to 17 schools. Four hundred seventy-two veterans were enrolled in BSN degree programs and 82 graduated with a BSN degree. It is estimated that 33 percent of participating veterans were underrepresented minorities in the field of nursing, and 24 percent reported coming from a financially and/or educationally disadvantaged background.

The **Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP)** supports the establishment and operation of a loan fund at participating schools of nursing to assist nurses in completing their graduate education to become qualified nurse faculty. In academic year 2014-2015, the NFLP supported 2,399 students pursuing faculty preparation.

Twenty percent of students who received a loan reported coming from a disadvantaged background and nearly 25 percent of students are considered underrepresented minorities in their prospective professions.

The **NURSE Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program (NURSE Corps)** offers to individuals, who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment as full-time or part-time nursing students, the opportunity to apply for funds. The NURSE Corps repays up to 85 percent of nursing student loans in return for at least three years of practice in a designated nursing shortage area. In FY 2015, the NURSE Corps loan repayment program made 590 loan repayment awards and 319 continuation awards. The NURSE Corps scholarship program made 257 new scholarship awards and 12 continuation awards during the same time period.

The NLN urges the subcommittee to fund the Title VIII nursing workforce development programs at \$244 million in FY 2018.

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