



**National League
for Nursing**

Testimony of the National League for Nursing

FY 2007 Appropriations for Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Committee on Appropriations

U.S. House of Representatives

March 30, 2006

The National League for Nursing (NLN) – representing more than 1,100 nursing schools and health care agencies, some 17,000 individual members comprised of nurses, educators, administrators, public members, and 18 constituent leagues – appreciates the Subcommittee's past support for nursing education and your continued recognition of the important role nurses play in the delivery of health care services.

We, however, are concerned. Unless additional resources are expended, the advancements made by Congress to help alleviate the nursing shortage will be impeded owing to the currently proposed FY 2007 appropriations level. The NLN advocates your continued support for Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs (Public Health Services Act), housed in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) with the congressionally prescribed mission of ensuring a sufficient supply of nurses. We urge you **to fund the Title VIII programs at a minimum level of \$175 million for FY 2007**. Placing this minimal funding request in perspective, note that during the last serious nursing shortage in 1974, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs. In today's dollars that appropriation would equate to approximately \$592 million, nearly four times the amount the federal government is spending on nurse education now.

Today's nursing shortage is very real and very different from any experienced in the past. The existing shortage is evidenced by an aging workforce and too few people entering the profession. A critical factor exacerbating the national nurse-workforce deficiency is the declining number of qualified nurses available to teach future generations of registered nurses. The NLN's **Faculty Survey** conducted in 2002 concludes that not enough qualified nurse educators exist to teach the number of nurses necessary to ameliorate the nursing shortage.

The NLN *Survey* found three trends influencing the future of nursing education over the next decade:

- **The aging of the nurse faculty population**

An average of 1.3 full-time faculty members per program left their positions in nursing education in 2002. About half the survey respondents had at least one unfilled budgeted full-time

faculty position and some had as many as 15 such positions. 36.5 percent of faculty who left their positions in the preceding year did so because of retirement; 8.6 percent of faculty were 61 years of age or older; and 75 percent of the current faculty population is expected to retire by 2019.

Approximately 1,800 full-time faculty members leave their positions each year. About 10,000 master's level nurses graduate per year, 15 percent of whom would have to enter teaching in order to maintain today's production level for generating the nation's nurse workforce. Since this is highly unlikely, the gap between unfilled positions and the candidate pool is widening significantly.

- **The increasing number of part-time faculty**

The number of part-time faculty has increased notably since 1996 – nearly 17 percent in baccalaureate programs and 14 percent in associate degree programs. Part-time faculty now provides approximately 23 percent of the estimated number of faculty FTEs.

Part-time employees often are not an integral part of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the overall nursing education program. Many may hold other positions that often limit their availability to students. Further, many part-time faculty have not been prepared for the faculty role.

- **The large number of nursing faculty who are not prepared at the doctoral level.**

Approximately half the full-time faculties in baccalaureate and higher-degree programs hold a doctoral degree. In associate degree programs, doctorally-prepared faculty account for only 6.6 percent of the total faculty and the number is slightly more than 5 percent in diploma programs. Only 350 to 400 nursing students receive doctoral degrees each year and the pool of doctorally-prepared candidates for full-time nursing professorships is very limited.

Educators without doctoral degrees may lack credibility within a university setting and have limited opportunities to assume leadership positions. Institutions with low numbers of doctorally-prepared educators may be less likely to obtain funds to support research or educational innovations. As important as educational incentives are for future practicing nurses, the scholarships for doctoral students who will instruct the next generation of nurses are even more critical.

Since less than an adequate number of nurse educators currently teach in the education pipeline, the situation appears to be growing acute and is not expected to improve in the near future absent adequate intervention. In a survey of the 2004-2005 academic year conducted by the NLN, an estimated 147,000 qualified applications were turned away from nursing programs at all degree levels owing in large part to the lack of faculty necessary to teach this number of additional students. This number represents a 17.6 percent increase from the 2003-2004 academic year. With an increasing application pool, a key priority in tackling the nurse shortage has to be scaling up the capacity to accept qualified applicants. Today's undersized supply of appropriately prepared nurses and nurse faculty does not bode well for meeting the needs of a diverse, aging population.

Congress made an important step in passing the *Nurse Reinvestment Act* in 2002. The new monies used to fund loans and scholarships are appreciated. Yet, it has become abundantly clear that significantly more funding is required to even minimally meet the HRSA charge to support nursing students and schools of nursing so as to meet the existing and rising national needs for nurses. In FY 2005, HRSA was forced to turn away 82% of the applicants for the Nurse Education Loan Repayment Program and more than 98% of the applicants for the Nursing Scholarship Program due to lack of adequate funding.

Please do not allow the nation to lose ground in the effort to remedy the nursing shortage. Fund Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs at a level commensurate with the severity of the health care crisis facing the nation today. Your support will help ensure that nurses exist in the future who are prepared and qualified to take care of you, your family, and all those in this country who will need our care.

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