



NLN Board Goes to the "Hill" Advocates for Title VII and VIII Funding

The NLN Board of Governors took to Capitol Hill on May 8. During the meetings with their congressional delegations, board members advocated for increased funding for Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs and restoration of the Health Professions Programs under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act.

TITLE VIII

Nursing Workforce Development Programs

- An increase in funding for Title VIII programs to a minimum of \$200 million in FY 2009 would raise the federal investment in Title VIII's nursing education to approximately seven hundred thousandths of the total federal budget. With an estimated 2.9 million licensed RNs and APRNs, nurses represent the largest occupation of all health care workers in the United States. Nearly half of the RN workforce is expected to reach retirement age within the next six to 11 years.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that employment of RNs is expected to grow 23 percent from 2006 to 2016, much faster than the average for all occupations. During this time period, the system is projected to generate 587,000 new RN jobs in addition to the hundreds of thousands of job openings resulting from the need to replace experienced nurses who will leave the occupation. The Health Resources and Services Administration projects that, absent aggressive intervention, the RN workforce will fall 36 percent below requirements by the year 2020. The present nurse faculty staffing deficit is expected to intensify as the existing nurse educator workforce reaches retirement age, with one half of nurse faculty in 2006 reporting that they expect to retire within the next 10 years, and 21 percent expected to retire within the next five years. With an estimated 32,000-plus nurse educator full-time equivalents, a mean of 1.4 full-time faculty members per nursing program in the United States left their positions in nursing education in 2006. Nurse educators earn only 76 percent of what colleagues in other academic disciplines do, and less than nurses with the same educational credentials working in clinical settings. (Cont'd page 2)

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TITLE VII Health Professions Programs

- ✓ The Health Professions Programs under Title VII should be restored to a funding level of \$300 million in FY 2009.
- ✓ Title VII programs – \$193.96 million in FY 2008 – are a cost-effective source of federal funding for the education of health care providers who are more likely to return to medically underserved areas where shortages occur.
- ✓ Although the administration's proposed FY 2009 budget supports initiatives to expand health care access for uninsured populations at community health centers, by dismantling Title VII programs the budget simultaneously neglects to ensure an appropriate supply of quality health care providers to treat these populations.
- ✓ According to a National Conference of State Legislatures survey, federal funding of Title VII programs influences the allocation of funds from the states and other sources to these programs, which are viewed as fundamental to the states' workforce goals.
- ✓ According to HRSA's 2007 annual performance measures, the Title VII programs exceeded expectations – by as much as 17 percent – in three key areas: the percentage of graduates and program completers that are underrepresented minorities and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds; the proportion of participants training in medically underserved communities; and the percentage of health professionals entering practice in underserved areas.

From the States . . .

Study Finds California Initiative Easing State's Nurse Shortage

According to a study released May 9 by the state's Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California is making progress in alleviating its severe nurse shortage. The study provides an update on the California Nurse Education Initiative indicating that the state's nursing programs are projected to graduate 10,391 RNs in the 2007-2008 academic year, a 68 percent increase over the 6,158 who graduated in 2003-2004. The study asserts that the increase is directly attributable to the five-year, \$90 million Nurse Education Initiative launched by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) in April 2005.

Since Schwarzenegger set the initiative in motion with the formation of a task force to oversee expansion of RN training programs, 23 new nursing education programs have started up throughout the state, the number of nursing students has increased by 24.7 percent, and 74 California community colleges have

expanded their programs. The state's community colleges account for about 70 percent of RN graduates.

The study also reports that, to date, the initiative has provided program grants to 19 community colleges, and \$2.6 million to the California State University system to add 445 students to its bachelor's and master's programs. In addition, the study projects that, if current efforts to expand nursing education are maintained, California will surpass the national average of 825 RNs per 100,000 residents by 2022. At present, California has 647 RNs per 100,000 residents; but in 2005, when the state first embarked on the Nurse Education Initiative, it had only 589 RNs per 100,000 residents.

While the results of the initiative so far are encouraging, California still has a long way to go to meet its needs, especially in light of a rapidly aging population that is putting increasing pressure on the health care work force. It is

premature, however, to say the state's nursing shortage has been resolved. Thirty percent of enrollments are funded through grants and donors. If those grants go away, all the gains in enrollment will also potentially go away.

New York Lawmakers Address Nurse Shortage

Following a report from the New York Health Care Association warning that the state will face a shortage of 37,000 nurses by 2015, lawmakers are coming together to try and keep nurses in New York. Legislation offered by the State Assembly to correct the problem includes establishing recruitment efforts, providing scholarships and student loan programs, and preserving insurance benefits while studying.

Assembly Republican Leader James Tedisco (R-Schenectady) held a press conference in the Capitol on May 13. He and his colleagues called for passage of five bills introduced by various members of the conference aimed at increasing the number of people studying to become nurses and the number of people actually entering and remaining in the field.

Of the five bills mentioned during the press conference, A.4980 introduced by Assemblyman Jim Bacalles, (R-Corning), establishes the New York state nursing recruitment incentive and retention program, and provides student loan reimbursements for anyone who is a registered or licensed nurse. The bill also directs the State University of New York and City University of New York systems to pay for the education of students who sign contracts agreeing to work in New York State as RNs. The bill is on the agenda of the Assembly's Higher Education Committee.

Loan Forgiveness Program on Hiatus in PA

During the week of May 19, countless nursing students and hundreds of nurses across Pennsylvania received the news that the state's loan forgiveness program had ended after the agency overseeing it announced it lacks the funding to keep it going. The revela-

tion has been met with disappointment from area health providers, nursing schools and elected officials.

Established in October 2002 in response to a decreasing number of enrollments in nursing and health care majors across the state, the program was created to relieve the deficiency and had four main goals:

- Encourage licensed practical nurses to earn registered nursing degrees.
- Increase the numbers of nurses attending graduate school to prepare to replace nursing educators who are approaching retirement.
- Increase the number of students enrolling in and graduating from approved nursing education programs.
- Increase the number of nurses working throughout the state.

Under the program, students would not have to pay back up to \$12,500 or 25 percent of student loans as long as they met certain conditions.

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Association Agency (PHEAA) and American Education Services agreed to fund the incentive in hopes of boosting the number of nursing students. A clause in the agreement, signed by each of the 828 participants, stated that the program could end at any time because of a lack of funding. According to spokesman Mike Reiber, PHEAA had no choice since lenders throughout the country are going through tough times because of the sub-prime mortgage crisis, a tough economy, and other factors.

Funds for two similar loan forgiveness programs for nurses were also stopped. One helped students studying to become nurse educators and the other was for nurses who go on to work in state veterans' homes.

The program is "on a hiatus," not eliminated, Reiber stated. "We hope the market turns around tomorrow. We hope all these programs start again real soon."