

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

November 9, 2005

Honorable Arlen Specter  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Tom Harkin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

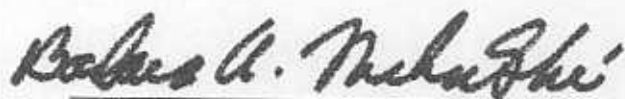
We are writing in strong support of retaining the Senate funding level of \$155.66 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs in the FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. Earlier this year, 51 Senators wrote to you in support of \$175 million, a roughly \$25 million increase, for these important nursing programs.

The United States is currently facing a nursing shortage of critical proportions. This shortage is only expected to worsen as the baby boom generation ages and their need for health care increases. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected that health care facilities will need to fill more than 1.1 million registered nurse job openings by 2012 to accommodate increasing patient needs and to replace retiring nurses. Most importantly, the current nursing shortage poses a significant threat to the ability of our health care system to deliver quality care.

Current funding levels fail to meet the growing need for nurses. In FY 2004, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) was forced to turn away 82% of the applicants for the Nurse Education Loan Repayment Program (NELRP), and 98% of the applicants for the Nursing Scholarship program due to lack of adequate funding. These much-needed programs are used to direct RNs into areas with the greatest need – including community health centers, disproportionate share hospitals, and departments of public health. Furthermore, nursing programs turned away over 32,000 qualified students last year, mainly because of a shortage of nurse faculty. In 1974, during the last serious nursing shortage, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs. In today's dollars that appropriation would be worth \$609 million, more than 4 times current spending.

The Title VIII programs represent an important investment for patients. We encourage you to join us in this bipartisan effort to ensure that these programs have the resources required to educate, recruit, and retain enough registered nurses. We respectfully request the retention of the Senate funding level, \$155.66 million, in the final FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. Your consideration of this request is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,





C. I. Chafee  
Bar Stimp

John Ensign  
Elizabeth Dole

Rick Warren

Jim Talent

Byron H. Morgan

Nurrell O'Donnell

Joe Biden

Sal Dur

Patrick Leahy

Ally

Tom F. Kelly  
Jim Jeffords

Patty Murray  
Gail Boreman

Debbie Stabenow

Anthony

Blanche L. Lincoln

John  
Johnston

Paul Sarbanes

Ernie Boyle

Jack Reed

James Kristin

James H. Lake

Frank R. Lautenberg

Ken Salazar

Dick Durbin

Jon Kyl

Marci Cochran

Mack Dayton

Chuck Grassl

Bob Baker

Ed Kennedy

Charles Schumer

E. Benjamin Johnson

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Jay Byrnes

Mike DeWine

Chris Donnelly

Sam Brownback

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