

Commitment to Quality Health Reform:

A Consensus Statement from the Nursing Community

April 10, 2009

Dear Healthcare Reform Stakeholder,

The Nursing Community is a coalition of professional nursing organizations committed to improving the health and health care of our nation. We are strongly committed to assisting the Administration and Congress in transforming the nation's healthcare system into a patient-centered environment in which all individuals have access to high-quality, cost-effective care. Registered Nurses (RNs) represent the largest group of healthcare professionals, with 2.9 million in the United States, and are involved in every aspect of health care. The services we provide are linked directly to the availability, cost, and quality of healthcare services, which are at the center of health reform discussions. Nurses represent the public interest and not a special interest. The contributions made by the practice and science of nursing are significant, and in collaboration with other healthcare professionals, can lead to meaningful change.

The attached consensus statement from the Nursing Community outlines six principles accompanied by specific policy recommendations and has been endorsed by 41 national nursing organizations. These principles, and the recommendations supporting them, illustrate the steps Congress should take to fully recognize and acknowledge the nursing profession's role in achieving the goals our country seeks in healthcare reform.

"Nurses provide extraordinary care. They're the front lines of the healthcare system... There are a lot of people who would love to be in that helping profession and yet we are just not providing the resources to get them trained. That's something that we have to fix. That's something that should be a no-brainer. That is something that should be a bi-partisan, no-brainer to make sure that we have the best possible nursing staff in our country."

*President Barack Obama
White House Health Care Summit
March 5, 2009*

The Nursing Community's principles complement five of President Obama's tenets outlined in his plan—***Transforming and Modernizing America's Health Care System***. Nurses ***Protect Families Financial Health*** and ***Make Health Care Coverage Affordable*** by providing cost-effective care at all levels of nursing practice. For example, it is well established that we need more primary care providers. Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) such as Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Midwives are addressing this need. More than 80% of nurse practitioners are primary care providers, and greater than 50% of APRNs are choosing to specialize in primary care as compared to less than 7% of medical students.

Nurses play a key role in the success of the President's ***Aim for Universality***. Without a strong investment in the nursing workforce, the goal of reaching universality will be unattainable, particularly for rural communities and underserved populations. RNs and APRNs provide essential services to those with critical need. Nurses are core members of the U.S. Public Health Service Corps and the National Health Service Corps in which their mission is to provide care to the underserved.

In addition, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists are the primary anesthesia providers in rural America, enabling healthcare facilities in these medically underserved areas to offer obstetrical, surgical, and trauma stabilization services. If the national shortage of RNs is not addressed or if APRNs are not used to their full scope of practice, this type of care and universality will be in jeopardy.

Nursing is an evidence-based discipline rooted in scientific inquiry, focusing on prevention and wellness. In addition, to caring for individuals with multiple conditions, nurses administer, teach, and promote wellness and prevention strategies, a skill set that is core to nursing practice. When the Administration and Congress *Invest in Prevention and Wellness*, existing practice and care models, such as the Nurse Family Partnership, derived from nursing science will serve as national exemplars for wellness and prevention.

The strength of the nursing profession lies in its contribution to *Improve Patient Safety and Quality Care*. According to a 2007 study by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, increases in RN staffing were associated with reductions in hospital-related mortality, failure to rescue, and reduced length of hospital stays. Nursing care is critical to improving healthcare quality and safety to ensure better patient outcomes.

The Nursing Community seeks to work with the Administration and Congress to develop a healthcare system that is accessible, affordable, safe, and provides the highest quality care. We stand ready to contribute to healthcare reform.

***Nursing Organizations who Support the Commitment to Quality Healthcare Reform:
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Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American College of Nurse Practitioners
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Public Health Association, Public Health Nursing Section
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Dermatology Nurses' Association

Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
National Alaska Native American Indian Nurses Association
National American Arab Nurses Association
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Nursing Centers Consortium
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
National Student Nurses' Association
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
Oncology Nursing Society
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
Visiting Nurse Associations of America
Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society