Health and Education Legislation in the 114th Congress

Each Congress, AACN works on a bipartisan basis to promote and advance nursing education, research, and healthcare priorities to ensure the voice of academic nursing is helping to craft legislation that will impact America’s health. The list below provides an overview of supported legislation in which AACN staff has assisted in the drafting process or has offered support based on the priorities set forth by AACN’s federal policy agenda.

Accelerating Biomedical Research Act of 2015 (H.R. 531, S. 318) would ensure that biomedical research remains a top priority by creating budget cap adjustments to allow for maximum investment in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) under the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25) and urges appropriators to sustain NIH’s budget adjusted for inflation throughout future fiscal years. The bill was introduced in the House on January 26, 2015 by Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Brian Higgins (D-NY), and Peter King (R-NY). It has the support of 20 additional cosponsors and has been referred to the House Committee on the Budget. The bill was introduced in the Senate on January 29, 2015, by Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Benjamin Cardin (D-MD). It has one other cosponsor and has been referred to the Committee on the Budget. AACN supported this legislation on March 17, 2015.

Protecting Access to Rural Therapy Services (PARTS) Act of 2015 (H.R. 1611, S. 257) would allow certain outpatient therapeutic and diagnostic services to be provided under general supervision, rather than direct supervision, of a physician or certain non-physician practitioner. It was introduced in the Senate on January 27, 2015 by Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS), Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) and Senator John Thune (R-SD). The bill has 15 additional cosponsors and has been referred to the Committee on Finance. H.R. 1611 was introduced by Representative Kristi Noem (R-SD) on March 25, 2015 and has two additional cosponsors. AACN supported this legislation as part of the Nursing Community coalition on March 17, 2015.

American Cures Act of 2015 (S. 289) would create a mandatory trust fund to promote investment and growth in biomedical research. The fund would be available to augment appropriations for the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Defense health program, and the Department of Veterans Affairs medical and prosthetics research program. S. 289 was introduced January 28, 2015 by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Ed Markey (D-MA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Al Franken (D-MN), Robert Casey (D-PA), and Charles Schumer (D-NY). It has two additional cosponsors and has been referred to the Committee on the Budget. AACN supported this legislation on March 17, 2015.

Supporting Academic Freedom through Regulatory Relief Act of 2015 (H.R. 970, S. 559) would address ineffective and costly regulations and related actions promulgated or proposed by the Department of Education on distance education, college rating system, and gainful employment. It was introduced in the House on February 13, 2015 by Representatives Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), John Kline (R-MN), Matt Salmon (R-AZ). There are 30 additional cosponsors and the legislation has been referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce. The bill as introduced in the Senate by Senators Richard Burr (R-NC), Chuck Grassly (R-IA), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Tom Cotton (R-AR), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Pat Roberts (R-KS), Deb Fisher (R-NE), Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Tim Scott (R-SC), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Rob Portman (R-OH), John Cornyn (R-TX), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Michael Enzi (R-WY), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) on February 25, 2015 and was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. It includes eight additional cosponsors. AACN supported the legislation in coalition with 26 other higher education associations on February 23, 2015.
Indian Health Service Health Professions Tax Fairness Act of 2015 (S. 536) would amend the tax code to provide health care professionals who receive student loan repayments from the Indian Health Service the same tax free status provided to those who receive National Health Service Corps Loan repayments. It was introduced in the Senate on February 24, 2015 by Senators Tom Udall (D-NM) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and has one additional cosponsor. It has been referred to the Committee on Finance. AACN supported this legislation as part of the Friends of Indian Health coalition on March 9, 2015.

Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015 (H.R. 1342, S. 578) would amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to allow nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives, and clinical nurse specialists to certify home health services for Medicare patients. The bill was introduced in the Senate on February 26, 2015 by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Charles Schumer (D-NY). It has 16 additional cosponsors and has been referred to the Committee on Finance. It was introduced in the House on March 6, 2015 and sponsored by Representatives Greg Walden (R-OR), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Mike Kelly (R-PA), Patrick Tiberi (R-OH), Todd Young (R-IN), Lynn Jenkins (R-KS), Ron Kind (D-WI), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Danny Davis (D-IL), Gregg Harper (R-MS), David McKinley (R-WV), Bill Johnson (R-OH), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Peter Welch (D-VT), Lois Capps (D-CA), and Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and has the support of 74 additional cosponsors. The legislation has been referred to the Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health and the Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health. AACN supported the Senate version with a diverse stakeholder coalition of 45 organizations on February 25, 2015 and the House version on March 6, 2015. The Nursing Community coalition sent a letter of support on March 18, 2015.

Improving Access to Maternity Care Act of 2015 (H.R. 1209, S. 628) would establish the designation of a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for maternity care services. This would allow the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to place professionals who provide full scope maternity healthcare within the National Health Service Corps in these areas to address the provider shortages. These providers would be placed in eligible medical facilities, including hospitals, birth centers, and other appropriate facilities. H.R. 4385 was introduced on March 3, 2015 by Representatives Michael Burgess (R-TX), Lois Capps (D-CA) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL). It has been referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. It has 28 additional cosponsors. It was introduced in the Senate on March 3, 2015 by Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). There are two additional cosponsors and the legislation has been referred to the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. AACN supported the legislation on March 17, 2015.

Improving Veterans Access to Quality Healthcare Act of 2015 (H.R. 1247) would recognize APRNs within the Veterans Health Administration as full practice providers, consistent with the Department of Defense. It was introduced in the House on March 4, 2015 by Representatives Sam Graves (R-MO) and Janice Schakowsky (D-IL). The legislation has been referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services. It has the support of 22 cosponsors. AACN supported the legislation as part of the APRN Workgroup and with 39 other nursing organizations on March 4, 2015. Additionally, a letter of support was sent on March 13, 2015 by the Nursing Community.

Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-10) permanently repeals the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) and extends funding for the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) as well as Community Health Centers, the National Health Service Corps, and Teaching Health Centers programs for two years. It was introduced in the House by Representative Michael Burgess, M.D., (D-TX) on March 24, 2015. The legislation passed in the House on March 26, 2015, passed in the Senate on April 14, 2015, and was signed into law by President Obama on April 16, 2015. AACN along with seven other national nursing organizations representing APRNs sent a letter of support to House and Senate leadership on March 24, 2015.