As the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) represents over 760 schools of nursing that educate over 450,000 students and employ more than 17,000 faculty members. Collectively, these institutions prepare approximately half of our nation’s Registered Nurses (RNs) and all nurse faculty members, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), and nurse scientists.

AACN respectfully requests that the subcommittee invests in America’s health by providing $244 million for HRSA’s Nursing Workforce Development programs (authorized under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.]) and $150 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) within the NIH in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. The Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research requests at least $32 billion for NIH in FY 2016, and the request level of $150 million for NINR denotes the same percentage increase for NIH applied to NINR. These levels will ensure that our nation’s nurses are prepared to care for the growing number of patients requiring a complex range of healthcare services.
The Role of Nurses in Our Healthcare System

As integral members of the healthcare team, and as the largest sector of the workforce with over three million licensed providers, nurses collaborate with other professions and disciplines to improve the quality of America’s healthcare system. Nurses serve in a multitude of settings, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, community centers, local and state health departments, schools, workplaces, and patient homes. RNs and APRNs treat and educate patients across the entire life span and ensure individuals follow through with care plans for optimal health outcomes.

In light of the national effort to meet increasing demands for care, our healthcare system will continue to transform. Innovative delivery models that promote efficiency and effectiveness require a team-based approach. AACN believes the demand for high-quality health services will only be achieved through collaboration with other health professions to provide safe, cost-effective, and patient-centered care. In order to do so, it is imperative that individuals seeking to enter the nursing profession are educated in a system that upholds these values. Investments are essential to ensure that a robust workforce of RNs and APRNs are available to provide the care that Americans need now and in the years to come.

How Title VIII Programs Serve the Public Today and in the Future

For over five decades, the Nursing Workforce Development programs have helped build the supply and distribution of qualified nurses to meet our nation’s healthcare needs. The programs bolster nursing education at all levels, from entry-level preparation through graduate study, and provide support to educate nurses to practice in rural and medically underserved communities.
Title VIII programs are essential to ensuring that the demand for nursing care is met by supporting future practicing nurses and the faculty who educate them. Moreover, the goals of these programs align with the Institute of Medicine’s report, *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, which calls for nurses to “achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.”

Title VIII programs address specific aspects of the nursing pipeline and patient populations experiencing high need, such as primary care, diversity in the workforce, and the aging population. Our healthcare system is experiencing a demand for APRNs (which include nurse practitioners (NPs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), and clinical nurse specialists), all of which require advanced degrees. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the projected employment of NPs, CRNAs, and CNMs is expected to grow 31% between years 2012-2022. APRNs are a real solution to the challenge of employing high-quality providers in underserved areas. Title VIII programs, such as the Advanced Education Nursing Traineeship (AENT) and Nurse Anesthetist Traineeship (NAT), facilitate this process by providing financial assistance to students pursuing an advanced practice degree. In academic year 2013-2014, AENT and NAT programs supported 5,650 students. Of these recipients, 56% received training in medically underserved areas, and 48% received training in primary care settings. Furthermore, 40% of trainees were from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds.

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According to the U.S. Census Bureau, individuals from ethnic and racial minority groups account for more than one-third of the U.S. population.\(^4\) With projections pointing to minority populations becoming the majority by 2043\(^4\), professional nurses must demonstrate a sensitivity to and understanding of a variety of cultures to provide high-quality care across settings. The Title VIII Workforce Diversity Grants program specifically targets groups under-represented in nursing by awarding grants and contract opportunities to schools of nursing, nurse-managed health centers, academic health centers, state or local governments, and nonprofit entities looking to increase access to nursing education for these students. In academic year 2013-2014, the program supported 16,997 students and aspiring students, partnering with over 1,000 clinical training sites—of which 54% were located in medically underserved areas.\(^3\)

Another equally important component of education, practice, and patient needs that Title VIII programs address is supporting education of students who will care for America’s aging population. In 2011, the oldest cohort of the Baby Boomer population, nearly 80 million Americans, turned 65, and approximately 10,000 Baby Boomers will reach age 65 each day through 2030.\(^5\) The Title VIII Comprehensive Geriatric Education program supports students who, upon graduation, will provide care to elderly Americans. More specifically, the program provides traineeships for individuals pursuing advanced education nursing degrees in geriatric nursing, long-term care, and gero-psychiatric nursing. Additionally, the program awards grants to train faculty in geriatrics. AACN respectfully requests $244 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs in FY 2016.


National Institute of Nursing Research: Improving Care through Evidence

As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at the NIH, NINR develops knowledge to build the scientific foundation for clinical practice, prevent disease and disability, manage and eliminate symptoms caused by illness, and enhance end-of-life and palliative care. Broadly speaking, these priorities focus on reducing disease and promoting health and wellness across the entire lifespan. Nurse scientists, often working collaboratively with other health professions, generate the evidence that drives practice. NINR examines ways to improve care models to deliver safe, high-quality, and cost-effective health services to the nation. In addition, NINR allots a generous portion of its budget towards training new nursing scientists, thus helping to sustain the longevity and success of nursing research. According to 2014-2015 AACN data, there are 5,290 doctoral students pursuing their PhD within AACN member schools, many of whom will also serve as faculty in our nation’s nursing schools. NINR training programs, such as the Career Transitions Award and Graduate Partnerships Program, are critical to supporting this cohort of students. These future nurse scientists will help discover new and effective care technologies and methods to improve patient wellness. **AACN respectfully requests $150 million for the NINR in FY 2016.**

Thank you for considering AACN’s request in FY 2016. If you have any questions, or if AACN can be of assistance, please contact AACN’s Senior Director of Government Affairs and Health Policy, Dr. Suzanne Miyamoto, at Smiyamoto@aacn.nche.edu or 202-463-6930, ext. 247.

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