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 produce 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 invest 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 National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. 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, nurses collaborate with other professions and disciplines to improve the quality of America’s healthcare system. RNs comprise the largest sector of the healthcare workforce with over three million licensed providers. 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. Nurses treat patients across the entire life span, and are present when patients and their families contemplate major decisions surrounding their health care. RNs and APRNs are responsible for providing patient education to ensure that individuals can follow through with their plan of care, thus helping to curb costly readmissions.

In light of the national effort to improve access to care, it is evident that our system will continue to transform. Innovative delivery models that promote efficiency and effectiveness require a team-based approach. AACN recognizes that in order for the profession to advance in accordance with the demand for high-quality health services, nurses must collaborate with other health professions to provide safe, cost-effective, patient-centered care. In order to do so, it is imperative that individuals seeking to enter into the profession and nurses in pursuit of advanced
degrees have the means to achieve these goals, particularly when the cost of higher education is not within financial reach. Investments are necessary to educate the RNs and APRNs who will provide the care that Americans need now and in 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 for 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, they align with the Institute of Medicine’s 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 so that they are met in accordance with their needs. For example, our healthcare system is experiencing a need for a greater number of APRNs (which include nurse practitioners (NPs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), and clinical nurse specialists (CNSS)). In fact, 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. Greater utilization of APRNs provides 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. The AENT and NAT programs provide full or partial reimbursement for the cost of tuition and program fees, and in academic year 2013-2014, 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.

According to U.S. Census Bureau, individuals from ethnic and minority groups account for more than one-third of the U.S. population, and by year 2044, more than half of all Americans are projected to belong to a minority group. AACN data reveals that approximately 30% of nursing students at each level (baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral) represent minority populations. As America’s population becomes increasingly diverse, it is important that our

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nation’s healthcare workforce reflects the patients it serves and that care is delivered in a culturally competent manner. Strengthening representation from minority groups within the nursing pipeline will be particularly critical in over the next few decades.

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. The goals of this program directly align with the IOM Future of Nursing report which recommends a renewed focus on diversity in nursing education as the nation looks to enhance the workforce to meet patient needs.2

Other equally important components of education, practice, and patient needs that Title VIII programs address include developing highly-educated nursing faculty, loan repayment and scholarship opportunities for students in exchange for service in a Critical Shortage Facility, supporting education of students who care for geriatric patients, and providing assistance for projects within schools of nursing, academic health centers, and nurse-managed health clinics. The dollars invested in Title VIII programs not only benefit the direct recipients, but also the countless patients that receive care from nurses and nursing students supported by these programs. 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’s work 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.7

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. According to 2013-2014 AACN data, there were 5,290 doctoral students pursuing their PhD within AACN member schools.8 NINR dollars afford budding researchers opportunities to contribute to these priorities through their innovative work.

In addition, NINR is committed to improving the health of the global community and understands that our nation does not exist in a silo. The state of healthcare abroad impacts

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foreign and domestic populations. NINR examines how nursing care can improve regions of the world facing severe health and economic challenges. Examples of NINR-funded global health research include reduction of HIV transmission and strengthening community-based outreach to reduce childhood illness.

Lastly, NINR allots a generous portion of its budget towards training new nursing scientists, thus helping to sustain the longevity and success of nursing research. NINR training programs such as the Career Transitions awards and Graduate Partnerships Program develop future nurse researchers, many of whom also serve as faculty in our nation’s nursing schools.

**AACN respectfully requests $150 million for the NINR in 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.

Thank you for considering AACN’s request of $244 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs and $150 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research 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.