March 17, 2015

The Honorable Mark Kirk  
U.S. Senate  
524 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senate  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kirk and Baldwin:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), I would like to thank you for introducing the Improving Access to Maternity Care Act of 2015 (S. 628). As the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, AACN represents over 760 nursing schools that educate nearly 457,000 students and employ over 17,000 faculty. Schools of nursing across this country currently are educating 942 nurse-midwifery students. This legislation would aim to ensure their expert care can reach the most vulnerable populations.

Specifically, the bill 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.

When there is a shortage of healthcare providers, patients can experience long wait times and in some cases they must travel long distances. Expanding maternity care in underserved areas will ensure women have the health care they need, when they need it, and where they live. This legislation proposes a cost neutral solution that will have a tremendous impact on access to care.

Again, we thank you for introducing S. 628. If our association can be of any assistance to your or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact AACN’s Senior Director of Government Affairs and Healthy Policy, Dr. Suzanne Miyamoto, at smiyamoto@aacn.nche.edu, or 202-463-6930, ext. 247.

Sincerely,

Eileen T. Breslin, PhD, RN, FAAN  
President