

September 24, 2007

The Honorable Bruce Braley  
U.S. House of Representatives  
408 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Braley:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), I would like to thank you for introducing the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs Reauthorization Act of 2007 (HR 2915). By leading the charge to reauthorize these programs, and to increase their funding levels, you have demonstrated a clear commitment to the education of health professionals in addition to expanding access to quality health care in our nation's underserved communities.

As you may know, AACN represents more than 600 schools of nursing at public and private universities and senior colleges with baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs that educate over 240,000 students and employ over 12,000 faculty members. These institutions are responsible for educating about half of our nation's registered nurses and all of the nurse faculty and researchers in the U.S.

The shortage of health care professionals, including nurses, is crippling our health care delivery system, especially in rural and underserved communities. The NHSC Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs provide these communities with highly skilled health care professionals who strengthen community health care systems.

The NHSC Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs also provide a means and an incentive for health professional students to pursue advanced degrees which allow them the opportunity to teach future generations of health professionals. This is especially important for the field of nursing, as nursing schools are struggling to expand student capacity and increase the number of registered nurses primarily due to a faculty shortage.

While AACN supports increased funding for the NHSC Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs, we would ask that you consider changing Sec 2 (d) to reflect a 10 percent allocation of funding to scholarships for medical students rather than a set allocation of \$30,000,000. This change would make your proposed language consistent with the current statute which stipulates under Title 42, Chapter 6A, Subchapter II, Part D, subpart iii, §254q(c):

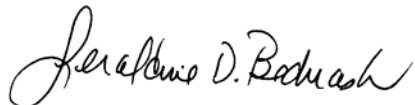
*With respect to certification as a nurse practitioner, nurse midwife, or physician assistant, the Secretary shall, from amounts appropriated under subsection (a) of this section for a fiscal year, obligate not less than a total of 10 percent for contracts for both scholarships under the Scholarship Program under section 2541 of this title and loan repayments under the Loan Repayment Program under section 2541-1 of this title...*

**ADVANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NURSING**

This change would ensure equal allocation of available funds among all health professional students.

We commend you and your staff for your efforts in addressing the need to reauthorize and increase funding for the NHSC Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs. Please do not hesitate to contact Stacey Pine from my staff at (202) 463-6930 ext. 224, on this or any other issue regarding nursing education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geraldine D. Bednash".

Geraldine "Polly" Bednash, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Executive Director