

October 24, 2007



The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
U.S. Senate  
201 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Biden:

We, the undersigned organizations, would like to thank you for proposing the Nursing Education Opportunities Act of 2007. By leading this charge to increase the number of nurses and nurse faculty, you have demonstrated a clear commitment to the nursing profession and our nation's healthcare delivery system.



American Association  
of Colleges of Nursing

For nearly a decade, the national shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) has dramatically changed the quality of care provided by our nation's healthcare delivery system. Due to this shortage, hospitals are increasingly understaffed, and nurses are continually assigned additional patients, which significantly lowers the quality of care provided. Bleak workforce projections provide no future relief to the shortage. In April 2006, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) predicted that the nation's nursing shortage would grow to more than 1,000,000 nurses by 2020.



The nursing shortage is further challenged by the nationwide nurse faculty shortage. Results from the most recent National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (NSSRN) conducted by HRSA show that only 13 percent of RNs hold a master's or doctoral degree. The NSSRN estimated that the average age of nursing faculty holding a doctorate was 55.7 years. Considering the average age of retirement for faculty nurses is 62.5, a wave of nurse educators will be leaving academia in the next few years.



Immediate attention is needed to alleviate the RN and nurse faculty shortages. It is imperative that nursing students receive adequate funding to support their education, and the pool of nurse faculty must be large enough to prepare our nation's much needed nursing workforce. The Nursing Education Opportunities Act would offer an approach to address both the current nursing shortage and the shortage of doctoral nurse faculty members. By increasing the loan amounts in the Nursing Student Loan Program and clarifying the accelerated nursing programs under Title VIII, your bill would open more opportunities for nursing students to find federal support. Additionally, this bill focuses on a long-term solution to the nursing shortage by providing opportunities for nursing schools to create a doctoral nursing program, share programmatic and faculty resources through a doctoral consortium, and prepare additional nurse educators through the nurse faculty pilot project. These programs would provide a targeted solution to the nurse faculty shortage by establishing and sharing resources.



We appreciate your recognition of the critical role the nurse faculty shortage plays on the current nursing shortage and commend you and your staff for your efforts in addressing this serious issue.



Sincerely,

American Academy of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Nephrology Nurses' Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Organization of Nurse Executives  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
National League for Nursing

