



February 4, 2008

The Honorable Rush Holt
1019 Longworth House Office Building
The U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Holt:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the American Nurses Association, we would like to thank you for offering the language included in the *Nursing School Capacity Act of 2007* (H.R. 677) as an amendment to the *College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007* (H.R. 4137).

Over the past decade, the inability to increase the supply of nurses has become more apparent as the challenges faced by nursing education programs have intensified. These challenges force schools of nursing to turn away thousands of qualified applicants each year. According to a 2006 AACN's report, U.S. nursing schools turned away 42,866 qualified applicants due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Almost three quarters of the nursing schools responding to AACN's survey pointed to faculty shortages as a primary reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into nursing programs. A *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions* released by AACN in July 2007, reported a total of 767 faculty vacancies (8.8 percent vacancy rate) identified at 329 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country.

Clearly, the obstacles faced by schools of nursing in attempting to increase enrollment and graduations are vastly complex and warrant further investigation. Your bill will facilitate the discussion of these constraints and help explore solutions to overcome the barriers that are preventing potential students from entering the nursing profession. In addition, your bill calls for recommendations to be made by the Institute of Medicine which will serve as a valuable resource for policy-makers as well as the health, industry, and education systems.

AACN and ANA sincerely appreciate your willingness to thoroughly investigate the nursing and nurse faculty shortage through the *Nursing School Capacity Act*.

Sincerely,

American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Nurses Association