

 American Association  
of Colleges of Nursing

June 22, 2009

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
U.S. Senate  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), I would like to thank you for introducing the *Preserving Patient Access to Primary Care Act of 2009* (S. 1174). As the national voice of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, AACN represents over 640 nursing schools that currently enroll approximately 270,000 students, including nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and other advanced practice registered nurses. We value your commitment to maintaining individual choice and access to a range of providers while seeking to increase primary care services in communities across the country.

By defining primary care to focus on quality health services, and explicitly including nurse practitioners as eligible clinicians, this legislation maintains patient choice when selecting a healthcare provider. Research has shown that nurse practitioners have equitable primary care outcomes as physicians and maintain cost-effective high quality care standards. The inclusion of the nurse practitioner as a leader in the medical home model recognizes these providers' expertise in comprehensive care coordination, chronic disease management, and health promotion activities.

Since loan repayment programs significantly improve access to advanced nursing education, we strongly support Section 340J of your bill. By expanding loan repayment eligibility to include primary care providers practicing in critical shortage areas, nurse practitioners will have a viable incentive to practice in these communities. Similarly, the proposal to alleviate shortages in obstetrics and gynecological care by supporting the education of certified nurse midwives through a loan repayment program will offer an incentive for these providers who frequently face reimbursement and malpractice cost challenges, while encouraging them to practice in high need communities.

AACN applauds this legislation that offers a comprehensive approach to address the dearth of health professionals practicing in primary care in many communities across the country. Thank you again for your recognition of the role advanced practice registered nurses can play in the provision of this care. Please feel free to have a member of your staff contact Suzanne Begeny, Director of Government Affairs, at [sbegeny@aacn.nche.edu](mailto:sbegeny@aacn.nche.edu) or 202-463-6930 if AACN can be of any service.

Sincerely,



Fay Raines, PhD, RN  
President

**ADVANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NURSING**

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