

March 12, 2009

The Honorable Tom Latham
U.S. House of Representatives
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Latham:

We, the undersigned organizations, would like to thank you for proposing the Nurses' Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act of 2009. As members of the nursing and healthcare community, we value your firm commitment to alleviating the nurse faculty shortage.

According to a July 2007 report released by the American Hospital Association, U.S. hospitals need approximately 116,000 nurses to fill positions that are currently vacant nationwide. In 2005, the Association of State & Territorial Health Officials identified public health nursing as the field where public health workforce shortages will be most severe. The shortage is projected to intensify as experienced nurses retire, the demand for nursing care grows, and the need for nurses in areas such as emergency preparedness challenges an overburdened system.

Complicating the problem further is the inability of nursing schools to expand capacity and educate the next generation of nurses. Each year schools of nursing across the country turn away qualified applicants in the tens of thousands. The number one reason cited by nursing schools is a significant lack of appropriately prepared faculty. This element of the shortage has created a negative chain reaction—without more nurse faculty, additional nurses cannot be educated, and without more nurses, the shortage will continue.

Your bill would help address the faculty shortage by offering a loan repayment program to current students enrolled in graduate nursing programs and advanced degree nurses who have recently graduated. The essential component of your bill is the nurse's commitment to serve as faculty for four years in an accredited school of nursing. This legislation would supplement and complement the current Nurse Faculty Loan Program authorized under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act by awarding grants to individual nurses. Due to heavy educational debt coupled with the opportunity to earn higher salaries in practice, a loan repayment program provides a viable incentive for nurses with advanced degrees to choose a career in education.

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 to address this serious issue.

Sincerely,
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American College of Nurse Practitioners
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of State and Territorial Director of Nursing
Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National League for Nursing
National Nursing Centers Consortium
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
National Student Nurses' Association
Public Health Nursing Section, American Public Health Association
Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates
Visiting Nurse Associations of America
Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society