



American Association
of Colleges of Nursing

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The Honorable Carolyn McCarthy
1224 Longworth House Office Building
The U.S. House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman McCarthy:

I am writing on behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) to thank you for introducing the *Teacher and Nurse Support Act of 2003* (H.R. 934). As the national voice of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, AACN represents nursing programs at more than 570 senior colleges and universities that educate over 150,000 students each year and employ over 9,300 nursing faculty. We commend you for your efforts to expand federal loan forgiveness and cancellation programs for nursing students and nursing faculty.

By amending the *Higher Education Act*, your legislation provides loan forgiveness and loan cancellation of up to \$17,500 for nurses that agree to work full-time in a clinical setting or as a member of the faculty at an accredited school of nursing. Budget constraints, an aging faculty, and increasing job competition have contributed to a shortage of nursing faculty. The lack of faculty to train the future nursing workforce impacts the current bioterrorism preparedness efforts, which rely heavily upon nurses.

Faculty shortages at schools of nursing are contributing to an overall decline in enrollments when the need for nurses is continuing to grow. According to AACN's report, *2002-2003 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, nursing schools turned away more than 4,000 qualified applicants across the United States due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. More than half (62%) of schools who responded to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting qualified applicants into entry-level baccalaureate programs. The financial incentives provided in your bill are an excellent way to attract and retain nursing faculty.

AACN supports your bill and your ongoing efforts to provide and expand educational opportunities for nursing students and nursing faculty during a time of critical shortage.

Advancing

Higher

Education

In

Nursing

Sincerely,

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