



October 20, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
522 Senate Hart Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee  
United States Senate  
511 Senate Hart Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman, Senate Health Education, Labor  
and Pensions Committee  
United States Senate  
731 Senate Hart Building  
Washington, DC 2051

The Honorable Christopher Dodd  
United States Senate  
448 Senate Russell Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Chairmen Baucus and Harkin, and Senator Dodd,

On behalf of the 29 undersigned organizations representing over 745,000 nurses and nursing students, we would like to thank you for your dedication and commitment to merging the *Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009* and the *America's Healthy Future Act*. Both bills include provisions that will improve access to quality healthcare. As a community of organizations that have a vested interest in promoting America's health through nursing care, we applaud the significant effort of both committees to address the workforce shortages. Therefore, we respectfully request that as you negotiate the merged Senate healthcare reform bill, these nursing workforce and education provisions remain in the legislation.

As you are well aware, a robust workforce is an essential component to the success of healthcare reform. Without an adequate number of healthcare providers, patients will be unable to access quality, cost-effective care. Moreover, healthcare reform will include expansions to primary, transitional, and preventive care — increasing the need for health professionals. Registered Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), including Nurse Practitioners (NPs) Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs), are educated to provide these vital healthcare services. Recognizing the need for more RNs and APRNs, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee bill includes a number of provisions to address this need in *Title IV— Healthcare Workforce*. Of particular interest to our community are *Subtitle C— Increasing the Supply of the Healthcare Workforce* and *Subtitle D— Enhancing Health Care Workforce Education and Training*. Below are specific sections from the *Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009* that we feel are critical to growing the nursing workforce needed to meet the demand for healthcare under a newly reformed system.

- Sec. 422. Nursing student loan program.
- Sec. 427. Funding for National Health Service Corps.
- Sec. 428. Nurse-managed health clinics.

- Sec. 429. Elimination of cap on Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service.
- Sec. 430. Establishing a Ready Reserve Corps.
- Sec. 438. Advanced nursing education grants.
- Sec. 439. Nurse education, practice, and retention grants.
- Sec. 440. Loan repayment and scholarship program.
- Sec. 441. Nurse faculty loan program.
- Sec. 442. Authorization of appropriations for parts B through D of title VIII.
- Sec. 446. United States Public Health Sciences Track.

The Senate Finance Committee bill also includes a critical nursing workforce provision. The Medicare Graduate Nursing Education demonstration project is uniquely structured to address the need for expanded clinical education, a barrier to increasing APRN enrollments. Unlike graduate students from other health professions, the clinical education of APRNs is not well funded. Many hospitals and other clinical sites are not reimbursed for the considerable time, space, and supplies involved in providing educational experiences for APRN students. If this demonstration project was enacted, Medicare patients as well as those in rural and underserved communities would benefit from the direct patient care provided by APRN students. Each APRN student receives between 500 and 1,000 supervised clinical hours and some CRNA students receive nearly 3,000 hours. During clinical hours, APRN students are providing essential healthcare services.

We believe this demonstration project is critical to the discussions around healthcare reform. APRNs are ideally suited to help implement delivery system reforms such as increasing primary, transitional, and preventive care; enhancing access for rural and medically underserved populations; improving care coordination and chronic care management; and reducing costly medical errors.

The Nursing Community commends the work you have undertaken to address the healthcare crisis in America. We are hopeful that under a newly reformed system Americans will have access to quality care, and the nursing workforce will grow to meet the demand. It is from your efforts and those of your colleagues that both the Senate Finance and Senate HELP Committee bills provide these critical nursing workforce provisions and as you merge these two pieces of legislation we ask that they remain in the bill. We greatly appreciate the consideration of our above requests.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses  
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing  
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses  
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists  
American College of Nurse Midwives  
American Nephrology Nurses' Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Organization of Nurse Executives  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses  
Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service  
Dermatology Nurses' Association  
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association  
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Nursing Centers Consortium  
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties  
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs  
Oncology Nursing Society  
Public Health Nursing Section, American Public Health Association  
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates  
Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society