

Testimony of

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to the

**Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies**
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

on

Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs
Health Resources and Services Administration

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National League
for **Nursing**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for convening this hearing to examine the federal funding options for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 appropriations for the ***Nursing Workforce Development Programs, authorized by Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act.***

I am Beverly Malone, the Chief Executive Officer of the National League for Nursing (NLN). The NLN is the sole organization representing leaders in nursing education and nurse faculty across **all** the types of nursing programs in the United States. With more than 1,100 nursing schools and health care agencies, some 20,000 individual members comprising nurses, educators, administrators, public members, and 18 constituent leagues across the country, the National League for Nursing is the premier organization – established 114 years ago – dedicated to excellence in nursing education that prepares the nursing workforce to meet the needs of our diverse populations in an ever-changing health care environment. On behalf of the NLN, and in light of my experience as a dean of nursing at a historically black institution for 10 years and my work in both clinical and academic organizations, I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the status of nursing education and the damage that could ensue to patients and our nation's health care by the ill-considered cuts aimed at Title VIII.

The NLN endorses the Subcommittee's past policy strategies for health care capacity-building through nursing education. We likewise respect your recognition of the requisite role nurses play in the delivery of cost-efficient health care services and the generation of quality health outcomes.

We are disturbed, however, that the seven-year and counting nursing shortage is outpacing the level of federal resources and investments that have been expended by Congress to help alleviate the nationwide nursing scarcity. The NLN is gravely concerned that the Administration's proposed FY 2008 appropriations for nursing education are inconsistent with the health care reality facing our nation. The President's budget proposes a decrease of funding of \$44 million (or 29 percent) for the Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs. This budget cut will diminish training and development, a shortsighted and hazardous course of action that potentially further jeopardizes the delivery of health care for the people in the United States.

As the nursing community has pointed out many times before, more than three decades ago during another less serious nursing shortage, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs. In today's dollars, that amount would be worth more than \$615 million – four times the amount the federal government currently is spending on Title VIII programs.

The National League for Nursing contends that the federal strategy should be to broaden, not curtail, Title VIII initiatives by increasing investments to be consistent with national demand. We urge the Subcommittee to ***fund the Title VIII programs at a minimum level of \$200 million for FY 2008.*** The NLN also advocates that Sec. 811 of Title VIII – ***Advanced Education Nursing Program – be restored*** and funded at an augmented level equal to the other Title VIII programs.

NURSE SHORTAGE AFFECTED BY FACULTY SHORTAGE

The Subcommittee is well aware that today's nursing shortage is real and unique from any experienced in the past with an aging workforce and too few people entering the profession at the rate necessary to meet growing health care requirements. NLN research provides evidence of a strong correlation between the shortage of nurse faculty and the inability of nursing programs to keep pace with the demand for new registered nurses (RNs). Without faculty to educate our future nurses, the shortage cannot be resolved.

The NLN's *Nursing Data Review 2004-2005: Baccalaureate, Associate Degree, and Diploma Program* revealed that graduations from RN programs contributed an estimated 84,878 additional prospective nurses to the RN labor supply falling far short of the nation's demands. In its biennial 10-year employment projections for 2004-2014, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that over the next 10 years, about 70,000 new RN jobs and 50,000 replacement jobs will accrue each year, for a total of 120,000 RN job openings per year. Multiply that annual sum by 10 years, and BLS's model-based findings estimate that 1.2 million new RN workers will be needed from 2004-2014. This growth represents a 29 percent projected change over the next 10 years.

The NLN's 2004-2005 data review shows that nursing school applications surged in recent years, rising more than 59 percent over the past decade. The 2004-05 academic year was no exception as almost 25,000 additional applications were submitted to nursing schools at all degree levels. Nonetheless, an estimated 147,000 qualified applications were turned away owing in large part to the lack of faculty necessary to teach additional students. Alarming too, this NLN review determined that new admissions fell by more than 27 percent in 2004-05 after two years of reported increases. The significant dip in admissions seems to mark a turning point, reinforcing that a key priority in tackling the nurse shortage has to be scaling up the capacity to accept qualified applicants.

TRENDS STRESSING FACULTY SHORTAGE

It is not surprising that the problem of nurse faculty vacancies often is described as acute and as exacerbating the national nurse-workforce shortfall. The NLN's research, reported in its *Nurse Educators 2006: A Report of the Faculty Census Survey of RN and Graduate Programs*, indicated that the nurse faculty vacancies in the United States continued to grow even as the numbers of full- and part-time educators increased. The estimated number of budgeted, unfilled, full-time positions countrywide in 2006 was 1,390. This number represents a 7.9 percent vacancy rate in baccalaureate and higher degree programs, which is an increase of 32 percent since 2002; and a 5.6 percent vacancy rate in associate degree programs, which translates to a 10 percent rise in the same period.

The data in the 2006 faculty census survey describe several trends, of which the following three are critical:

AGING OF THE FACULTY POPULATION

Nursing programs responding to the survey indicated that almost two-thirds of all full-time nurse faculty members were 45- to 60-years old and likely to retire in the next five to 15 years. A mean of

1.4 full-time faculty members per program left their positions in 2006, with 24 percent of these departures due to retirement. It is an open question where schools of nursing will find replacements for these experienced individuals.

DECREASE IN DOCTORALLY PREPARED FACULTY

Data show that nurse faculty are less well-credentialed in 2006 than they were four years earlier when the last NLN faculty census was conducted. A little over 43 percent of full-time baccalaureate and higher degree program faculty hold earned doctorates; whereas only 6.6 percent of associate degree program full-time faculty and 0.7 percent of diploma program full-time faculty are doctorally prepared. The overwhelming majority of the full-time faculty in associate degree (83 percent) and diploma (92.6 percent) programs hold the master's degree as their highest earned credential. The master's degree was the most common credential among part-time faculty members.

INCREASE IN PART-TIME FACULTY

Nearly 45 percent of the estimated mean number of faculty full-time equivalents are part-time faculty. Nationwide, the mean number of faculty members per institution had grown to 14.9 full-time and 12.1 part-time faculty in 2006, compared to 12.3 full-time and 7.4 part-time in 2002. The estimated number of part-time baccalaureate faculty has grown 72.5 percent since 2002. Over fifty-eight percent of baccalaureate and higher degree programs and almost half of associate degree programs (47.5 percent) reported hiring part-time faculty as their primary strategy to compensate for unfilled, budgeted, full-time positions. While the use of part-time faculty allows for greater flexibility, often they are not an integral part of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the overall nursing program.

THE FEDERAL FUNDING REALITY

Today's undersized supply of appropriately prepared nurses and nursing faculty does not bode well for our nation, where the shortages are deepening health disparities, inflated costs, and poor quality of health care outcomes. Congress moved in the right policy direction in passing the ***Nurse Reinvestment Act*** in 2002. That act made Title VIII programs a comprehensive system of capacity-building strategies to develop nurses by providing schools of nursing with grants to strengthen programs, through such activities as faculty recruitment and retention efforts, facility and equipment acquisition, clinical lab enhancements, and loans, scholarships and services that enable students to overcome obstacles to completing their nursing education programs. Yet, as the HRSA Title VIII data show, it is abundantly clear that Congress must step up in providing critical attention and significantly more funding to this ongoing systemic problem.

Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program – In FY 2005, with 4465 applicants to the Title VIII Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, 803 awards were made (599 initial two-year awards and 204 amendment awards), or 18 percent of applicants received awards. In FY 2006, there were 4222 applicants to the program; 615 awards were made (373 initial two-year awards and 242 amendment awards) with 14.6 percent of applicants receiving awards.

Nursing Scholarship Program – In FY 2005, 3482 applications were submitted to the Nursing Scholarship Program, and 212 awards, or 6.1 percent of the applicants received scholarships. In FY 2006, there were 3320 applicants to the same program and 218, or 6.6 percent, awards were.

Advanced Education Nursing (AEN) Program – This program supports the graduate education that is the foundation to professional development of advanced practice nurses, whether with clinical specialties or with a specialty in teaching. In FY 2005, AEN supported 11,949 graduate nursing students across the specialties. The President’s proposed FY 2008 budget eliminates this program, which is fundamental to appropriately preparing future nursing faculty, the engine of the workforce pipeline. AEN must be restored and fully funded in order to prevent the nation from losing ground in the effort to remedy the nurse and nurse faculty shortages.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NURSING RESEARCH (NINR)

We would be remiss in not acknowledging that nursing research is an integral part of the effectiveness of nursing care. NINR provides the knowledge base for improving the quality of patient care and reducing health care costs and demands. Critical to enhancing research within the nursing profession is the infrastructure development that increases the pool of nurse investigators and nurse educators, expands programs to develop partnerships between research-intensive environments and smaller colleges and universities, and promotes career development for minority researchers. Yet, as noted by the expanding list of non-nursing journals that publish the investigator findings of NINR-sponsored research, an investment in NINR goes far beyond just the nursing community and produces research results for **all** health care providers.

The relatively small investment made by the federal government in NINR is well justified for the outcomes received. For example, NINR has supported research that

- Led to nursing intervention enabling excellent metabolic control in diabetic adolescents;
- Devised ways to sustain reduced high blood pressure in young African-American men;
- Reduced the burdens of caregivers of persons with dementia or other chronic care needs; and
- Developed a successful, national model for Spanish speakers in a community-based Arthritis Self-Management Program.

As the only organization that collects data across all levels of the nursing education pipeline, the NLN can state with authority that the nursing shortage in this country will not be reversed until the concurrent shortage of qualified nurse educators is addressed. Without adequate faculty, there are simply too few spots in nursing education programs to train all the qualified applicants out there. This challenge requires millions of dollars of increased funding for the professional development of nurses. The NLN urges Congress to ***strengthen existing Title VIII nurse education programs by funding them at a minimum level of \$200 million for FY 2008.***

Your support will help ensure that nurses exist in the future who are prepared and qualified to take care of you, your family, and all those in this country who will need our care.