

**Testimony Prepared for the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
& National Institutes of Health (NIH)
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Strengthening the Current and Future Nursing Workforce

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), we would like to thank the Subcommittee for its leadership and continued support of nursing education, the nursing profession, and nursing research. As the national voice for academic nursing, AACN represents more than 875 schools of nursing at private and public universities, who educate more than 520,000 students and employ more than 57,000 faculty.¹ Collectively, these institutions graduate registered nurses (RN), advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), educators, researchers, and frontline providers. Given the need to meet the growing demand for health care, historic investment is necessary to support the future nursing workforce. As you consider and advance the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-ED) appropriations bill, AACN respectfully requests that you provide support of at least **\$530 million for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs** (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.], administered by HRSA, and at least **\$210 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)**.

Landscape Overview: The Growing Nursing Workforce Demand

Nurses comprise the largest sector of the healthcare workforce, with more than four and a half million RNs and APRNs, which include Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs).² From the classrooms to the frontlines, we know first-hand how critical a well-educated nursing workforce is to providing high-quality health care. This need is only expected to intensify, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting the demand for RNs to increase by 6% through 2032, representing the need for an additional 177,400 nurses.³ Demand for certain APRNs (NPs, CRNAs, and CNMs) is expected to grow even more, by 38%.⁴ In fact, about

¹ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2024) Who We Are. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/about-aacn>

² National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2024). Active RN Licenses: A profile of nursing licensure in the U.S. as of April 25, 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncsbn.org/nursing-regulation/national-nursing-database/licensure-statistics/active-rn-licenses.page>

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). Occupational Outlook Handbook-Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). Occupational Outlook Handbook-Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm>.

193,100 job openings for RNs⁵ and 29,200 job openings for APRNs⁶ are projected every year for the next decade.

Nursing schools have faced years of challenges meeting the increased demand for faculty and students to ensure nursing pathways remain strong. These impacts illustrate the need for enhanced federal investment in FY 2025. For example, in AACN's latest survey, enrollment in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs increased by only 0.3% (or 825 students) from 2022-2023.⁷ Yet, nursing schools saw enrollment decline in baccalaureate degree-completion programs and graduate programs at the master's and PhD levels, "which poses a threat to meeting the nation's healthcare needs."⁸ Enrollment in master's programs decreased by 0.9%, which translates to 1,176 fewer students, and marks the third year of enrollment decline.⁹ PhD nursing programs also saw enrollment declines of 3.1%.¹⁰ Over the last decade, 2013-2023, PhD enrollment has decreased by 17.5%.¹¹ Declines in graduate nursing programs are of great concern, as these programs help prepare individuals for critical roles in administration, teaching, research, informatics, and direct patient care. Enrollment declines coupled with approximately 1,977 full-time faculty vacancies in baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country underscores how vital funding for nursing education is to support the preparation of all nurses to meet the healthcare needs of our communities, including those in rural, urban, and underserved areas.¹²

Educational pathways are just one piece of the puzzle. Strong and historic investments in the current nursing workforce are imperative, especially as we contend with the fact that "more than one-quarter of all nurses report that they plan to leave nursing or retire over the next 5 years."¹³ Further, the median age of an RN went from 52 in 2020 to 46 in 2022, a decline that was associated with the loss of over 200,000 experienced RNs to the workforce.¹⁴ We must minimize the loss of experienced nurses who may prematurely leave the profession, and at the same time support nursing schools focused on meeting the current and future demand for nurses. That is why bold investments in Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR are imperative, not only as we confront existing health challenges, but as we advance tomorrow's innovative healthcare solutions.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). Occupational Outlook Handbook-Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). Occupational Outlook Handbook-Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm>.

⁷ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2024) New AACN Data Points to Enrollment Challenges Facing U.S. Schools of Nursing Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/news-data/all-news/article/new-aacn-data-points-to-enrollment-challenges-facing-us-schools-of-nursing>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2023). [Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions](https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Data/Vacancy23.pdf). Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Data/Vacancy23.pdf>

¹³ National Council of State Boards of Nursing and the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers (2023) The 2022 National Nursing Workforce Survey. Retrieved from: [https://www.journalofnursingregulation.com/article/S2155-8256\(23\)00047-9/pdf](https://www.journalofnursingregulation.com/article/S2155-8256(23)00047-9/pdf)

¹⁴ Ibid

Investments in Nursing Education Support a Stronger Nursing Workforce

For over fifty years, Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs have been a catalyst for strengthening nursing education at all levels, from entry-level preparation through graduate study. Through grants, scholarships, and loan repayment programs, Title VIII federal investments positively impact the profession's ability to serve America's patients in all areas, bolster diversity within the workforce, and increase the number of nurses needed to respond to public health emergencies and care for our aging population.

Each Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Program provides a unique and crucial mission to support nursing education and the profession. For example, the Advanced Nursing Education (ANE) Programs helps increase the number of APRNs in the primary care workforce, including support for more than 8,000 students in Academic Year 2022-2023 alone.¹⁵ In the same timeframe, the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) supported 2,746 nursing students who intend to serve as nurse faculty.¹⁶ As we address social determinants of health and work to build a healthcare system able to timely serve all patients, it is imperative that we recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds to the nursing profession. Increasing diversity in the profession will not only create lifelong career pathways but will also improve care quality and access to population-centered care. The Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) Program helps accomplish the goal of strengthening pathways into the nursing workforce. In fact, in Academic Year 2022-2023, the NWD Program awarded grants supporting over 2,000 nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁷ To ensure the stability of our nursing workforce now and in the future, we request **at least \$530 million for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs in FY 2025.**

From Research to Reality: Nursing Science Protects Americans' Health

AACN recognizes that scientific research and discovery are the foundation on which nursing practice is built and is essential to advancing evidence-based interventions, informing policy, and sustaining the health of the nation. As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at NIH, the NINR is integral to improving care and is on the cutting edge of new innovations that impact how nurses are educated and how they practice. According to a 2019 report, "NINR funds 80% of training grants and >70% of Center grants, which support the education and infrastructure for research, respectively, at Schools of Nursing."¹⁸ Yet, a separate report states that, "NINR funding is inadequate relative to the number of doctoral programs in nursing," and that the NINR budget would need to "increase at least fivefold" to "adequately fund nursing science."¹⁹ It is through funding to NINR that nurse scientists, often working collaboratively

¹⁵ Health Resources and Services Administration. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Pages 143-146. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2025.pdf>

¹⁶ Health Resources and Services Administration. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Pages 154-156. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2025.pdf>

¹⁷ Health Resources and Services Administration. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Pages 147-150. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2025.pdf>

¹⁸ Schnall, R. (2019). National Institute of Health (NIH) funding patterns in Schools of Nursing: Who is funding nursing science research and who is conducting research at Schools of Nursing? *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 36(1), 34-41. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755722319301164?via=ihub#>

¹⁹ Kiely, D. P. and Wysocki, A. B. (2020). Federal funding of nursing research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH): 1993 to 2017. *Nursing Outlook*, 68(3), 270-283. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S002965541930315X>



with other health professionals, are generating groundbreaking findings and leading translational research. The scope of this research encompasses a range of strategic imperatives, such as addressing social determinants of health, population health, health promotion, and new models of care. To further this vital work, we are requesting a total of **at least \$210 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research in FY 2025.**

Enhanced support for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR is critical to sustaining a strong nursing workforce able to care for our nation's population. AACN respectfully requests support in FY 2025 of **at least \$530 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs** and **at least \$210 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research.** Together, we can ensure that such investments promote innovation and improve health care in America.