

FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

2025-2026

Elevating Academic Nursing



ABOUT AACN

As the collective voice for academic nursing, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) serves as the catalyst for excellence and innovation in nursing education, research, and practice. AACN is committed to fostering collaborative relationships with nursing, healthcare, and higher education communities, as well as Congress and the Administration. Through these partnerships, AACN has helped advance policies that sustain the nursing workforce and establish the critical role of nurses in delivering quality, cost-effective, team-based healthcare. AACN's member schools are preparing nursing students to be leaders, collaborators, researchers, and clinicians, who help support and transform healthcare in our country.

875+
NURSING
SCHOOLS IN ALL
50 STATES, DC,
AND PUERTO RICO

520,000+

**NURSING
STUDENTS IN
BACCALAUREATE
AND GRADUATE
PROGRAMS**

57,000+

**NURSING
FACULTY**

AACN's Federal Policy Priorities

AACN STANDS READY TO WORK WITH THE 119TH CONGRESS AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AS WE ADVANCE THE FOLLOWING PRIORITIES
ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVING HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE IN OUR NATION:

ENHANCE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND NURSING PRACTICE

Higher education is critical to the success of the nursing student in safely and effectively delivering high-quality, patient-centered care for all communities. Our nursing schools encourage collaboration, benefit the economy, promote innovation, and strengthen nursing education pathways. AACN recommends:

- *Increasing support for schools of nursing, faculty, and students to ensure a strong supply of baccalaureate and graduate prepared nurses by sustaining and preserving federal student loan programs, such as the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, Pell Grants, Perkins Loan Program, and the Graduate PLUS Loan.*
- *Removing barriers to higher education to ensure equal opportunities for nursing students from all backgrounds, including those that have been historically underrepresented in higher education and the nursing workforce.*
- *Supporting rigorous accreditation that ensures superior and effective educational programs without creating unnecessary regulatory burden to allow nursing students, academic institutions, and communities to flourish.*

IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE NATION THROUGH NURSING CARE

Supporting nurses' contributions and well-being positively impacts patient outcomes, strengthens the healthcare infrastructure, and increases the overall health of our nation. AACN recommends:

- *Investing in networks of nurse-led/managed centers and clinics in which teams of healthcare professionals provide accessible population-based care in communities where people live, work, and play.*
- *Allowing Registered Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to practice to the full extent of their education and clinical training.*
- *Ensuring nurse experts are represented on all relevant federal taskforces, committees, and councils.*

DEVELOP AND SUPPORT A ROBUST NURSING WORKFORCE

Fostering academic-practice partnerships improves nursing student learning, drives faculty and clinician collaboration, and creates a unique environment that focuses on high-quality and cost-effective patient and family-centered care. AACN recommends:

- *Increasing funding for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs, and other efforts to support baccalaureate and graduate nursing students who are future frontline providers, faculty members, nurse preceptors, and researchers.*
- *Investing in programs that recruit individuals from all backgrounds to the nursing profession, facilitate retention, and promote career progression.*
- *Implementing nursing workforce policies and funding streams that reflect emerging trends focused on growth and quality in the healthcare system.*

PURSUE TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH LED BY NURSE SCIENTISTS

Scientific discoveries by nurse scientists and researchers improve health, cure diseases, and yield immeasurable return on investment to the healthcare system, patient, and community. As we look at emerging technologies, such as leveraging AI, a balanced approach focusing on quality and patient-centered care remains paramount. AACN recommends:

- *Elevating the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), where nurse scientists across the country investigate methods and examine relationships to improve public health, generate groundbreaking findings, address social determinants of health, and lead translational research.*
- *Expanding the scientific workforce, through sustained and increased funding for nursing research and the education of future nurse scientists.*
- *Supporting nurse-led healthcare and health services research done by nurse scientists at the federal level to ensure that the healthcare system better supports patient outcomes and improves the overall health of the nation.*



**American Association
of Colleges of Nursing**

The Voice of Academic Nursing



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