

**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 & National Institutes of Health
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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. AACN is the national voice for academic nursing, proudly representing more than 840 member schools, 543,000 nursing students, and more than 45,000 faculty across the country. As we work to combat current public health challenges, such as COVID-19, ensuring a robust nursing pipeline, now and in the future, requires a strong and sustained federal investment. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, AACN respectfully requests your continued investment in America's health by providing at least **\$278 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), at least **\$44.7 billion for NIH**, and at least **\$182 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)**.

The Growing Nursing Workforce Demand

Nurses make up the largest sector of the healthcare workforce, with more than four million Registered Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs); including Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs), treating patients across the entire life span and educating the next generation of healthcare providers.¹ These nurse educators, students, and practitioners are leaders within their institutions and communities and are on the frontlines as we address public health challenges, including COVID-19.

As we address COVID-19, we have witnessed the dire need for additional nurses. This demand is only expected to grow as we continue to combat this pandemic and address the healthcare needs of our communities, especially in rural and underserved areas. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the projected RN Workforce demand is expected to increase 12% by 2028, representing a call for an additional 371,500 nurses.² Demand for most APRNs is expected to grow by 26%.³

¹ National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2020). Active RN Licenses: A profile of nursing licensure in the U.S. as of March 18, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncsbn.org/6161.htm>.

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Occupational Outlook Handbook- Registered Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>.

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). 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>.



While nursing schools across the country are working to meet the rising demand and educate all qualified applicants interested in the profession, they are often stymied by a shortage of nursing school faculty. Though AACN reported a 3.7% enrollment increase in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs in 2018, this increase is not sufficient to meet the projected demand for nursing services, including the need for more nurse faculty, researchers, and primary care providers.⁴ That is why enhancing and preserving federal resources, such as Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs and NINR, are essential to bridging this chasm between supply and demand, and ensuring we have an adequate nursing workforce ready to respond at a moment's notice and positively impact healthcare outcomes for all Americans.

Nursing Workforce Investments: Ensuring Healthcare Access

As we have seen in efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, a well-educated nursing workforce is essential to ensuring the safety and health of our Nation. The Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs represent the largest dedicated federal funding stream to nursing education and the workforce. These indispensable programs consistently and continually sustain the supply and distribution of highly-educated nurses by strengthening nursing education at all levels, from entry-level preparation through graduate study. Through these indispensable federal investments, the profession's ability to serve America's patients continues in all communities, especially those most in need.

Education and Sustaining a Strong Nursing Workforce:

Each Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Program provides a unique and crucial mission to support nursing education and the profession. Together, these programs offer opportunities to help educate nurses, address patient demand, and respond to any unforeseen challenges, such as COVID-19. For example, the Advanced Nursing Education (ANE) programs increase the number of APRNs in the primary care workforce and supported more than 9,100 students in Academic Year 2018-2019 alone.⁵ The ANE programs support students studying to become APRNs, and other nurses requiring a master's or doctoral degree, by providing federal support, as well as faculty development, to ensure a robust nursing workforce. Other examples include the Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) and Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) programs. In Academic Year 2018-2019, the NFLP awarded 80 grants to schools that supported 2,277 graduate nursing students, which effectively increases the number of nurse educators.⁶ In the same academic year, the NWD program awarded grants supporting 11,067 nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which supports the critical need of recruiting culturally and economically diverse individuals into nursing to better serve our nation's diverse patient population.⁷

⁴ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2019). Nursing Shortage Fact Sheet as of April, 2019. Page 2. Retrieved from <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Factsheets/Nursing-Shortage-Factsheet.pdf>

⁵ Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2021 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Pages 141-143. <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

⁶ Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2021 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Page 154. <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

⁷ Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2021 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Page 146. <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

To ensure the stability of our nursing workforce, we request at least **\$278 million for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs.**

From Research to Reality: Nursing Science Protects Americans' Health

Scientific research and discovery are key to providing the best care possible. As one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at NIH, NINR plays a fundamental role in improving care and is on the cutting edge of new innovations impacting how nurses are educated and how they practice. A prime example of this groundbreaking scientific work is an NINR-funded study that has identified a protein that could be used to detect mild traumatic brain injuries through a simple blood test.⁸ Annually, millions of Americans experience these mild traumatic brain injuries and this effective, fast-testing method could revolutionize diagnosis and lower costs by eliminating the need for costly and time intensive brain imaging.⁹

This is just one of countless examples showcasing the innovative and pioneering work that nurse scientists are discovering through the support of NINR. Yet, despite many research successes, NINR was only able to fund 8.9% of grant applications in 2017, due to insufficient funding.¹⁰ This is the lowest research project grant (RPG) success rate among all NIH institutes and centers, and significantly lower than the overall NIH RPG success rate of 18.7%.¹¹ Despite these funding challenges, some NINR-funded projects returned between \$202 and \$1,206 for each dollar awarded in grants, according to a recent study in the journal *Nursing Outlook*.¹² To further this vital work, we are requesting a total of at least **\$182 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research.**

Strong investments in Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs and NINR have a direct impact on the nursing pipeline and patient access to high-quality, evidence-based care in communities across the nation. During these challenging times, AACN respectfully requests continued support in FY 2021 of at least **\$278 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs** and **\$44.7 billion for the National Institute of Health, which includes \$182 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research.** Together, we can ensure that such investments promote innovation and improve healthcare in America.

⁸ National Institute of Nursing Research. (2020). Research Highlights. Retrieved from: <https://www.ninr.nih.gov/researchandfunding/researchhighlights#highlight-1>

⁹ National Institute of Nursing Research. (2020). Research Highlights. Retrieved from: <https://www.ninr.nih.gov/researchandfunding/researchhighlights#highlight-1>

¹⁰ Federal Funding of Nursing Research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH): 1993-2017 Kiely, Daniel P. et al. (2019) Page 9. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(19\)30315-X/addons](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(19)30315-X/addons)

¹¹ Federal Funding of Nursing Research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH): 1993-2017 Kiely, Daniel P. et al. (2019) Page 9. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(19\)30315-X/addons](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(19)30315-X/addons)

¹² Federal Funding of Nursing Research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH): 1993-2017 Kiely, Daniel P. et al. (2019) Page 2. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(19\)30315-X/addons](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(19)30315-X/addons)