March 16, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We respectfully request that the Nursing Workforce Development Programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act, administered by HRSA) receive $244 million in Fiscal Year 2017 through the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. An investment in our nursing workforce today is a commitment to America’s health care now and into the future.

It is critical that the nation prepares for the current and impending strains on our healthcare system. A growing number of patients with multiple chronic conditions, baby boomers requiring additional health services, increased access to the healthcare system, and an aging healthcare workforce are converging simultaneously. Bolstering the nursing pipeline to ensure high-quality care is critical.

For over 50 years, the Title VIII programs have supported the nursing workforce by increasing the number of Registered Nurses and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, as well as the faculty who educate them. For example, in academic year 2014-2015, the Title VIII Advanced Nursing Education (ANE) Grants program supported 8,735 graduate nursing students. Moreover, ANE grantees partnered with 4,200 clinical training sites, of which 45% were located in medically-underserved areas and 46% were in primary care settings. At a time when the need for healthcare services—including primary care—continues to grow, it is vital that nurses are present in regions where they are most needed. Title VIII programs also aim to promote a diverse nursing workforce to reflect an increasingly diverse patient population. Last year, the Nursing Workforce Diversity program supported 13,225 nursing students and aspiring students to promote the recruitment of individuals from racial and ethnic minorities underrepresented in registered nursing.

Title VIII programs are designed to address specific needs within the nursing workforce and America’s patient populations. Therefore, strong support for Title VIII reinforces our healthcare delivery system’s ability to provide timely access to cost-effective care in all communities.
We sincerely appreciate your consideration of our request and understand the difficult decisions your Subcommittee will face in this fiscal climate. However, support for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs is a direct investment in the nursing workforce, our nation’s well-being, and the sustainability of our healthcare system as a whole.

Sincerely,

Jeff Merkley
United States Senate

Tim Kaine
United States Senate

Sherrod Brown
United States Senate

Brian Schatz
United States Senate

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senate

Gary C. Peters
United States Senate

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate

Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senate

Patrick Leahy
United States Senate

Bernard Sanders
United States Senate

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate

Edward J. Markey
United States Senate

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senate

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senate

Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senate

Al Franken  
United States Senate

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senate

Barbara Boxer  
United States Senate

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senate

Robert Menendez  
United States Senate

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senate

Jon Tester  
United States Senate

Martin Heinrich  
United States Senate

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate

Jack Reed  
United States Senate

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate

Ron Wyden  
United States Senate
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate

Cory A. Booker
United States Senate