

Requests to Promote Health and Increase Access to Care

Strengthening the Nursing Workforce

Infrastructure Proposals

A qualified, engaged, diverse workforce is the core infrastructure of our health care system. COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on our health care heroes who have been on the front lines of the pandemic with many suffering from trauma, burnout and increased behavioral health challenges. A number of health care organizations experienced critical staffing issues due to the demands of surges of critically ill COVID-19 patients, as well as assistance in helping control the pandemic through testing, contact tracing and vaccine deployment. As Congress considers infrastructure proposals, we urge you to support efforts to ensure an adequate, sustainable nursing workforce including:

- Funding educational loan pay-downs and vouchers for clinicians and other front-line workers;
- Bolstering the capacity of schools of nursing and allied health professionals, and increasing the number of faculty;
- Providing visa relief during emergency response;
- Funding research and demonstration programs related to clinician well-being;
- Establishing grants for cultural competency training for health care professionals; and
- Providing grants to expand, modernize and support schools of nursing in rural, underserved areas or minority-serving organizations.

FY 2022 Appropriations Request:

\$530 million for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs

The pandemic exacerbated the looming nursing workforce shortage facing any parts of our country, especially rural and medically underserved communities. Investing in the pipeline of registered and advanced practice registered nurses is critical for Americans' access to health care. In 2020, nursing schools had to deny more than 65,000 qualified applicants into entry-level nursing programs due primarily to a shortage of faculty and clinical sites. The Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs:

- Strengthen nursing education and fund institutions educating nurses to practice in rural and medically underserved communities.
- Help increase diversity within the nursing workforce through grants, scholarships, stipend support, pre-entry preparation, and loan forgiveness programs.
- Addresses the critical nursing shortage via projects to expand the nursing pipeline, promote career mobility, provide continuing education, and support retention.

\$193 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research

- As part of the National Institutes of Health, the NINR funds research, which establishes the scientific basis for quality patient care.
- NINR-funded research projects focus on reducing chronic illness, improving quality of life and promoting patient-centered care.

Contact Information

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Invest in Nursing Education Infrastructure

Support the Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN) Act, (S.246/H.R.851)

- Invest in schools of nursing to ensure nursing education pathways remain strong during public health challenges, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support schools of nursing, students, faculty and academic nursing infrastructure by providing needed resources to enroll and retain nursing students; modernize nursing curriculum and establishing nurse-led interdisciplinary and interprofessional educational partnerships; hire and retain a diverse faculty to educate the future nursing workforce; and modernize technological and educational infrastructure.

Support Clinician Resiliency and Mental Health

Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act, (S. 610 and H.R. 1667)

Nearly one in five health care workers say they need mental health services due to the pandemic but have yet to seek care because they're too busy, unable to get time off, can't afford it or are too afraid or embarrassed. A recent KFF/Washington Post Frontline Health Care Workers Survey indicated 62% of front-line health care workers believe worry or stress related to COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health. More than half said they experienced trouble sleeping or sleeping too much and 16% reported an increase in their alcohol or drug use.

Our clinicians need and deserve added support as they continue to care for severely ill patients. We urge Congress to support the bipartisan Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act, which aims to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout and behavioral health disorders among health care professionals. The legislation would:

- Authorize grants to health care providers to establish programs that offer mental and behavioral health services for front-line workers;
- Require the Department of Health and Human Services to study and develop recommendations on strategies to address provider burnout and facilitate resiliency; and
- Direct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to launch a campaign encouraging health care workers to seek assistance when needed.

Expand Telehealth to Increase Access

Support CONNECT for Health Act of 2021, (S.1512/H.R. 2903)

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, hospital, health systems and providers used telehealth to care for patients virtually, reducing potential exposure to COVID-19 patients for health care professionals and the public. We urge Congress to expand on the proven success of telehealth to increase access to care by making permanent certain telehealth flexibilities allowed during the public health emergency including:

- Expanding practitioners who can provide telehealth;
- Lifting geographic and originating site restrictions that currently limit where patients can access telehealth; and
- Allowing billing for audio-only telephone and video services.

As Congress considers meaningful ways to improve the promise of telehealth, it is also important the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) proactively consider the positive impact of telehealth on access to care by adopting a more flexible approach to adding new telehealth services to Medicare.

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