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For Immediate Release:

## **BUSH BUDGET CUTS THREATEN HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR NATION'S MOST VULNERABLE**

**Washington, D.C., February 7, 2007** – The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) today criticized President Bush's proposal to eliminate Title VII health professions programs and to cut funding for Title VIII nurse training programs, warning that the proposed cuts will threaten access to health care for disadvantaged and underserved communities.

The president's fiscal year 2008 budget proposes only \$115 million for both Title VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act, compared to \$295 million in fiscal year (FY) 2006. The FY 2007 joint funding resolution passed by the House of Representatives on Jan. 31, which is now pending Senate approval, provides \$335 million for both programs, restoring some of the funding lost in the 52 percent cut to Title VII programs in FY 2006.

With initiatives to expand community health centers and to provide health care coverage for uninsured populations, the administration's budget neglects to ensure an appropriate supply of quality health care providers to care for the nation's most vulnerable patients. At a time when community health centers are reporting significant health care provider shortages, it is important to note that providers trained under the Title VII and VIII programs are more likely to work in such settings, including rural and other underserved regions. The president's proposal to dismantle the health professions and nursing workforce development programs will force health professions schools nationwide to terminate interdisciplinary training and recruitment programs that are essential to maintaining a workforce of well-trained safety net providers.

Title VII programs are virtually eliminated in the president's proposal, leaving only \$10 million for the Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students program, which received \$47 million in FY 2006 and in the pending FY 2007 congressional continuing resolution. All other Title VII programs are eliminated, including:

- Diversity programs to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in the health care workforce to more accurately reflect the diversity of the nation's population,

- more -

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- Primary care medicine and dentistry programs to increase the number of primary care providers, particularly in rural and other underserved areas,
- All interdisciplinary programs, including Area Health Education Centers, Health Education and Training Centers, geriatric training programs, the Quentin Burdick Rural Training Program, and allied health programs—which emphasize interdisciplinary training and caring for underserved populations, and
- Public health workforce programs, which support public health traineeships, preventive medicine residencies, dental public health training, and health administration traineeships.

For Title VIII nurse education, practice, and retention programs, which are crucial to alleviating the nationwide nursing shortage, the administration proposes a \$45 million cut (30 percent below the FY 2006 level and the amount provided in the congressional resolution). The proposal eliminates Advanced Education Nursing Grants that help schools of nursing improve the education and practice of nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, nurse anesthetists, and other primary care providers. Most critically, these grants serve to educate future nurse faculty; the nurse faculty shortage is the number one reason cited for turning away thousands of qualified applicants from schools of nursing each year. In FY 2005, almost 12,000 student nurses received traineeships or benefited from education grants at 422 schools of nursing. By eliminating this program, the health care delivery system stands to lose some of the most highly educated nurses teaching in schools of nursing, practicing in all health care settings, and serving citizens in rural and underserved areas.

HPNEC recommends that Congress provide \$550 million for the Title VII and VIII health professions and nursing programs in FY 2008.

The Title VII and VIII health professions and nursing education programs, administered by the Bureau of Health Professions within the Health Resources and Services Administration, support the training and education of quality health professionals through loans, loan guarantees, and scholarships to students, and through grants and contracts to academic institutions and non-profit organizations.

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The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) is an alliance of more than 70 national organizations representing schools, programs, health professionals, and students dedicated to ensuring the health care workforce is well-trained to meet the needs of the nation's diverse population. For more information, visit <http://www.aamc.org/advocacy/hpniec/>.