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For Immediate Release:

BUSH BUDGET CUTS THREATEN HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR NATION'S COMMUNITIES IN NEED

Washington, D.C., February 4, 2008 – 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 (FY) 2009 budget proposes only \$110 million for both Title VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act, compared to \$350 million in FY 2008. The Title VII programs suffered a massive 51.5 percent cut in FY 2006—most of that funding has not been restored.

While the Bush administration has supported initiatives to expand health care access for uninsured populations, the president's budget neglects to ensure an appropriate supply of quality health care providers to treat these populations. At a time when community health centers are reporting significant health care provider shortages—especially in rural and underserved areas—it is important to note that providers trained under the Title VII and VIII programs are more likely to work in areas where these shortages occur. 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 that are eliminated in the president's proposal, include:

- Diversity programs designed to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in the health care workforce to more accurately reflect the diversity of the nation's population,
- Primary care medicine and dentistry programs designed to increase the number of primary care providers, particularly in rural and other underserved areas,

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- All interdisciplinary programs, including Area Health Education Centers, the geriatric training program, and allied health programs—all of 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 \$46 million cut (30 percent below the FY 2008 level). The proposal eliminates Advanced Education Nursing Grants designed to help nursing schools improve the education and practice of nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, nurse anesthetists, and other primary care providers. Most critically, these grants help to educate future nurse faculty—the nurse faculty shortage is the primary reason why thousands of qualified applicants are turned away from nursing schools every year. In FY 2006, almost 14,000 student nurses received traineeships or benefited from education grants. By eliminating this program, the health care delivery system stands to lose some of the most highly educated nurse faculty and nurses in practice, including those who provide care to 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 2009.

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/>.