



March 7, 2011

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the over 60 member organizations of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC), I urge you to support the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution introduced in the Senate and oppose the House-passed H.R. 1, which will destabilize funding for the nation's health professions education and training programs. HPNEC is an alliance of national organizations representing schools, programs, health professionals, and students dedicated to ensuring the health care workforce is trained to meet the needs of the country's diverse populations.

The House-passed H.R. 1 will substantially weaken the health professions and nursing education programs authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) by imposing a drastic 30 percent cut on these essential programs. In contrast, the Senate proposal preserves funding for Title VII and Title VIII by allowing them to continue meeting the nation's growing workforce needs. These are the only federal health professions programs that specifically address some of the nation's most pressing workforce concerns by helping to improve the supply, distribution, and diversity of the health care workforce nationwide. The Title VII and Title VIII programs play an essential role in both preparing health professions students for careers in the health professions and bringing health care workers to communities where quality health care is difficult to find.

Funding cuts to Title VII and Title VIII will reduce education and training support for primary care physicians, nurses, and other health professionals. Provisions in H.R. 1 that decrease funding for these programs will jeopardize activities to train professionals across all disciplines to provide care to our rapidly-growing elderly population, and will severely impact the distribution of health professionals practicing in rural and underserved communities. Cuts will impact the entire range of health professions education and training, dampening efforts to recruit and retain a diverse and culturally competent workforce – one of the biggest factors in mitigating health disparities—and health professions faculty to mentor the next generation of health professionals. However, the Senate proposal will allow the programs to continue to fill the gaps in the health care workforce, which will be vital as the demand for health professionals continues to increase.

In this challenging budget environment, HPNEC recognizes that Congress must make difficult decisions as it seeks to improve the nation's fiscal stability. However, no one benefits when important initiatives that improve Americans' health and help fill job vacancies in one of the fastest-growing sectors are destabilized. To meet the health care needs of all Americans, we must ensure that a strong and prepared health care workforce is in place. Please support the Senate proposal for FY 2011 and oppose the House-passed H.R. 1.

Sincerely,

Tannaz Rasouli
Executive Director