



July 27, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

The undersigned organizations of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) write to urge you to fund fully the health professions education programs by providing at least \$550 million for the Title VII health professions programs and the Title VIII nursing workforce development programs in the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. This appropriations level is needed if these programs are to fulfill their shared mission of improving the supply, distribution, and diversity of health professionals nationwide. HPNEC is an alliance of national organizations representing schools, programs, health professionals, and students dedicated to ensuring the health workforce is educated and trained to meet the needs of our diverse population.

In FY 2006, funding for the Title VII programs was drastically reduced by 51 percent, causing programs across the nation to cease their activities. We are pleased that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill take an important step toward reversing the underfunding of these essential programs. Many of the programs, however, did not receive significant increases and are still funded at levels much lower than they have been in previous years, despite recent evidence that they are effective tools.

A December 2008 Institute of Medicine report characterized HRSA's health professions programs as "an undervalued asset." Additionally, recent studies in peer-reviewed journals such as *Academic Medicine*, *Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine*, *Annals of Family Medicine*, and *American Journal of Public Health* underscore the significant positive impact that Title VII and VIII funding has on students, and subsequently on the populations that these health professionals treat.

While we understand that there are many competing priorities in the FY 2010 appropriations bill, it is essential that Congress renew its commitment to the health professions programs to help resolve systemic workforce shortages and deliver care to our nation's most vulnerable communities.

Supporting the Title VII and VIII programs is an investment in the health professions workforce and the health of the nation. We urge you to fully fund the Title VII and VIII programs in the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill.

Your support is greatly appreciated. We look forward to working with you to ensure the continuation of Congressional support for these critical programs that are necessary to preserving the health and well-being of the American people.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Physicians
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Osteopathic Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
Association of Academic Health Centers
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Departments of Family Medicine
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Coalition of Urban Serving Universities
College of American Pathologists
Council on Social Work Education
National AHEC Organization
National Association for Geriatric Education
National Association of Geriatric Education Centers
National Association of Medical Minority Educators, Inc.
National League for Nursing
National Rural Health Association
North American Primary Care Research Group
Oncology Nursing Society
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine
Student National Medical Association