September 19, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chair  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Committee  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

The 45 undersigned members of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) write to urge full funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)’s Title VII and Title VIII programs in the FY 2012 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. HPNEC supports a commitment to the programs commensurate with the need identified in HRSA’s FY 2012 Congressional Budget Justification for $762.5 million to help mitigate provider shortages across health professions disciplines.

The Title VII health professions and Title VIII nursing education programs are the only federal programs that specifically address some of the nation’s most pressing health care workforce concerns (such as primary care), help meet the needs of special and underserved populations, and help improve the diversity of the nation’s health care workforce. Since 1963, the programs have helped prepare the health care workforce to respond to the country’s evolving needs. For example, in recognition of the increasingly team-based nature of health care, the programs facilitate education and training opportunities for a wide range of health professionals in interdisciplinary settings. Similarly, the programs equip tomorrow’s health care workforce to care for the country’s growing, aging population, and help fill other gaps in the supply of health professionals not met by traditional market forces.

Through student loans, loan guarantees, and scholarships to students, and grants and contracts to institutions, the Title VII and VIII programs seek to enhance health care services in rural and underserved areas and guide aspiring and practicing health professionals to communities and careers where vacancies persist. The programs remain a critical element of the nation’s health care safety net and will continue to strengthen the workforce as more individuals seek access to health care services.

While we recognize the difficult decisions Congress faces in securing the nation’s fiscal stability, we urge you to prioritize the nation’s health care workforce needs with $762.5 million for the Title VII and Title VIII programs in FY 2012. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,