



March X, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair DeLauro and Murray, and Ranking Member Cole and Blunt,

The X undersigned members of Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) **urge Congress to provide \$1.51 billion for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Title VII health professions and Title VIII nursing workforce development programs for FY 2022.** HPNEC is an alliance of national organizations representing schools, students, health professionals, and communities dedicated to ensuring that the health care workforce is educated and trained to meet the needs of all patients.

We appreciate that Congress has allocated modest increases for a handful of Title VII and Title VIII programs in recent years; however, most programs, including the certain health diversity workforce programs, have been flat-funded. The coalition's proposed increase will help HRSA address health inequities and patients' evolving needs across America, especially as the current and future health care workforce remains on the frontlines of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The HRSA Titles VII and VIII programs have helped the country combat COVID-19, despite the new challenges the pandemic posed for grantees. Many grantees pivoted their curriculum to educate our health workforce during this public health challenge. There were unexpected costs to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for in-person clinical training or switching to a virtual learning experience. Simultaneously, the pandemic has underscored the need to increase and continuously reshape our health workforce. The programs have proven successful in

recruiting, training, and supporting public health practitioners, nurses, geriatricians, mental health providers, and other frontline health care workers critical to addressing COVID-19. Additionally, HRSA has tasked grantees with utilizing innovative models of care, such as training providers in telehealth, to improve patients' access to care during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also underscored the pervasive health inequities facing minority communities, as well as gaps in care for our most vulnerable patients, including an aging population that requires more health care services. The U.S Census Bureau projects that by 2045: our population will grow by over 18%, more than half the country will come from a racial or ethnic minority group, and one in five Americans will be over the age of 65.¹ Furthermore, HRSA projects that 122 million Americans already live in Health Professions Shortage Areas.² The Title VII and Title VIII programs educate current and future providers to serve these ever-growing needs, while preparing for the health care demands of tomorrow. A diverse health care workforce improves access to care, patient satisfaction, and the learning environment. Studies show that Title VII and Title VIII programs lead to increasing the number of underrepresented students enrolling in health professions schools, heightening awareness of factors contributing to health disparities, and attracting health professionals more likely to treat underrepresented patients.³

Additionally, the HRSA health professions and nursing workforce programs are structured to advance new delivery systems and models of care — for example, promoting interprofessional teams and integrating mental health services with primary care. Whether developing a new curriculum to address emerging public health crises, such as substance use disorders, or collaborating with community leaders in educating providers to deliver culturally competent care, the Title VII and Title VIII programs help ensure our health workforce is at the forefront of meeting all patients' health needs.

Title VII and Title VIII programs include:

- **Public Health Workforce Development** programs train America's public health workforce to identify underlying causes of health issues, new disease strains, health disparities, and other public health issues vital to the country's response to any pandemic.
- **Health Careers Opportunity Program, Centers of Excellence, Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students, and Faculty Loan Repayments** programs support the training and mentorship of future health professionals from underrepresented backgrounds.
- **Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development** programs provide federal support to address all aspects of nursing workforce demands, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention, with a focus on the health care needs of rural and underserved communities.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/cb18-41-population-projections.html>

² <http://data.hrsa.gov/Default/GenerateHPSAQuarterlyReport>

³ <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0027968419300653?token=7DFCE7AE5AD4BD333361FBC8DFBACC8F1C74D3AB288F4E39AC209D4701E97C41AC8CB4DBBE8F0707116491A17F6C4E7F>

- **Primary Care Medicine, Pediatric Loan Repayment, and Oral Health Training** programs improve health care access and quality in underserved areas by training general internists, family medicine practitioners, general pediatricians, oral health providers, and physician assistants.
- **Area Health Education Centers, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs, and Geriatrics Academic Career Awards**, which support interdisciplinary, community-based training programs for health care professionals, provide support for health care delivery in rural and urban underserved areas.
- **Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program, Mental and Substance Use Disorders Workforce Training Demonstration Program, and the Graduate Psychology Education Program**, strengthens our nation's demand for mental health and substance use support, which is expected to increase dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Health Professions Workforce Information and Analysis**, which advises future decision making on America's health workforce during times of crisis

With our nation needing to increase investment in our health workforce, HPNEC urges Congress to provide \$1.51 billion for the HRSA Title VII and Title VIII programs in FY 2022. With any questions, please contact Brett Roude (broude@aamc.org).

Sincerely,