

June 17, 2009

Dear Senator/Member of Congress:

Nurses and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) must play a crucial role in any health care reform plan that attempts to successfully improve the accessibility, quality and affordability of health care for Americans. APRNs are ideally suited to help implement much needed delivery system reforms such as an increased focus on primary and preventive care, enhancing access for rural and medically underserved populations, improving care coordination, chronic care management and reducing costly medical errors. However, we face a looming shortage of nurses even before factoring in the increased demands of health care reform and an aging population.

With this in mind, we urge you to support an initiative that would substantially boost the number of highly-skilled APRNs available to care for Americans. The proposal would extend Medicare's support for nursing education to cover the costs of graduate nursing education. It would not impact in any way other existing Medicare programs supporting the education of health professionals.

Specifically, the proposal would:

- Reimburse hospitals for the costs of advanced practice graduate nursing education provided through affiliations with accredited schools of nursing and accredited APRN educational programs, and in partnership with two or more non-hospital community-based care settings in which at least half of all clinical training would be carried out (this community-based care settings requirement could be waived for the clinical training of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists and Certified Nurse-Midwives in rural and medically underserved areas).
- Be limited to those graduate nursing education costs that are attributable to the preparation of APRNs with the skills necessary to provide primary and preventive care, transitional care, chronic care management, and other nursing services appropriate for the Medicare population. This could include four types of advanced practice nurse accredited educational programs: Nurse Practitioners, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, Certified Nurse Midwives and Clinical Nurse Specialists.
- Require hospitals to pass-on to the affiliated accredited APRN educational programs and partnering community-based clinical training sites (via the accredited educational programs when sites are arranged through the schools) all the costs of such educational activities attributable to each. Regular audits would be made to assure that payments are being correctly billed and reimbursed.
- Assure the greatest return on investment by supporting growth of accredited APRN educational programs (produce the greatest number of additional APRNs at the least cost to taxpayers).

We believe that a proposal that meets these principles would represent a substantial and cost-effective investment in improving our health care system and urge that it be included in any final health care reform legislation.

AARP

American Academy of Nursing

American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

American Nurses Association

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

American College of Nurse Practitioners

American College of Nurse-Midwives

National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National League for Nursing

National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties