

**Statement by the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition on
FY 2022 Appropriations Submitted for the Record to the House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies –
May 19, 2021**

The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) is an alliance of over 90 national organizations representing schools, students, health professionals, and communities dedicated to ensuring that the health care workforce is trained to meet the needs of our diverse population. Together, the members of HPNEC advocate for adequate and continued support for the health professions and nursing workforce development programs authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). *For fiscal year (FY) 2022, HPNEC encourages the subcommittee to adopt at least \$1.51 billion for HRSA Titles VII and VIII programs.*

The HRSA Titles VII and VIII programs are essential to educating our health care workforce to manage health care crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The immense challenges of the pandemic have underscored the need to increase and reshape our health workforce, and the Title VII and VIII programs successfully recruit, train, and support public health practitioners, nurses, geriatricians, advanced practice registered nurses, mental health providers, and other frontline health care workers critical to addressing COVID-19. Additionally, HRSA tasked Title VII and Title VIII grantees to utilize innovative models of care, such as training providers in telehealth, to improve patients' access to care during the pandemic.

Additionally, with 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 65, additional investment is needed in the Title VII and Title VIII programs which are designed to train providers in treating these populations.

We urge Congress to increase funding for the Title VII and Title VIII programs to educate current and future providers that serve these ever-growing needs while preparing for the health care demands of tomorrow.

Diversity Pipeline Programs – The COVID-19 pandemic has 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 Title VII and Title VIII programs play an essential role in improving the diversity of the health workforce and connecting students to health careers by supporting recruitment, education, training, and mentorship opportunities. Inclusive and diverse education and training experiences expose providers to backgrounds and perspectives other than their own and heighten cultural awareness in health care, resulting in benefits for all patients.

Diversity programs include the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), Centers of Excellence (COE), Faculty Loan Repayment, Nursing Workforce Diversity, and Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS). Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of such pipeline programs in strengthening students' academic records, improving test scores, and helping minority and disadvantaged students pursue careers in the health professions. Title VII diversity pipeline programs reached over 10,000 students in the 2018-2019 academic year (AY), with SDS graduating nearly 1,400 students and COE reaching more than 5,600 health professionals; 56% of which were located in medically underserved communities.

Title VIII's Nursing Workforce Diversity Program increases nursing education opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds through stipends and scholarships and a variety of pre-entry and advanced education preparation. In AY 2018-19, the program

supported more than 11,000 students, with approximately 46% of the training sites located in underserved communities.

Primary Care Workforce – The Primary Care Medicine Programs expand the primary care workforce, including general pediatrics, general internal medicine, family medicine, and physician assistants through the following programs: Primary Care Training and Enhancement (PCTE) and Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry Career Development. The Primary Care programs are also intended to encourage health professionals to work in underserved areas. In AY 2018-2019, 61% of PCTE programs were located in medically underserved communities and 30% in rural areas.

The Medical Student Education program, which supports the health care workforce by expanding training for medical students to become primary care clinicians, targets higher education institutions in states with the highest primary care workforce shortages. By providing grants to institutions, the program develops partnerships among institutions, federally recognized tribes, and community-based organizations to train medical students to provide primary care that improves health outcomes for those living in rural and other underserved communities.

Interdisciplinary, Community Based Linkages – Support for community-based training of health professionals in rural and urban underserved areas is funded through Title VII. By assessing the needs of the local communities they serve, Title VII programs can fill gaps in the workforce and increase access to care for all populations. The programs emphasize interprofessional education and training, bringing together knowledge and skills across disciplines to provide effective, efficient, and coordinated care.

Programs such as Graduate Psychology Education (GPE); Opioid Workforce Enhancement Program; Mental and Behavioral Health, and Behavioral Health Workforce

Education and Training (BHWET), respond to changing delivery systems and models of care, and timely address emerging health issues in their communities. The BHWET and Mental and Behavioral Health programs, which include GPE, provides training to expand access to mental and behavioral health services for vulnerable and underserved populations. In AY 2018-19, nearly 50 percent of all BHWET and GPE grantees provided substance use disorder treatment services.

Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) support the recruitment and training of future physicians in rural areas and provide interdisciplinary health care delivery sites, which respond to community health needs. In AY 2018-19, AHECs supported 192,000 pipeline program participants, provided over 34,000 clinical training rotations for health professions trainees.

Title VII Geriatric Workforce programs integrate geriatrics and primary care to provide coordinated and comprehensive care for older adults. These programs offer training across the provider continuum, focusing on interprofessional and team-based care and academic-community partnerships to address gaps in health care for older adults. To advance the training of the current workforce, the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) provided 1,342 unique continuing education courses to 187,955 faculty and practicing professionals in AY 2018-19, including 445 courses on Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases

Nursing Workforce Development – Title VIII nursing workforce development programs provide federal support to address all aspects of nursing workforce demands, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention, focusing on rural and medically underserved communities. These programs include Advanced Nursing Education; Nursing Workforce Diversity; Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention; NURSE Corps; and Nurse Faculty Loan Program. In AY 2018-2019, the Title VIII Advanced Education Nursing programs

supported more than 9,000 nursing students in primary care, anesthesia, nurse-midwifery, and other specialty care, all of whom received clinical training in primary care in medically underserved communities and/or rural settings.

Oral Health – The Primary Care Dentistry program invests in expanding programs in primary dental care for pediatric, public health, and general dentistry. The Pre- and Postdoctoral Training, Residency Training, Faculty Development, and Faculty Loan Repayment programs encourage integrating dentistry into primary care.

Public Health – Public Health Workforce Development programs support education and training in public health and preventive medicine through different initiatives, including the only funding for physicians to work in state and local health departments. In AY 2018-2019, Public Health Workforce grantees delivered unique continuing education courses to more than 226,500 practicing professionals in the workforce.

Workforce Information and Analysis – The Workforce Information and Analysis program provides funding for the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis as well as grants to seven Health Workforce Research Centers across the country that perform and disseminate research and data analysis on health workforce issues of national importance.

While HPNEC's members acknowledge the increasing demands and fiscal challenges facing appropriators, funding for HRSA's workforce development programs is critical in creating a culturally competent workforce that can respond to future health threats and challenges facing all Americans. Therefore, HPNEC encourages the subcommittee to provide at least \$1.51 billion in the FY 2022 appropriations bill for HRSA's Title VII and VIII programs to continue the nation's investment in our health workforce.