

**Statement by the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition on  
FY 2023 Appropriations Submitted for the Record to the House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies –  
May 26, 2021**

The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) is an alliance of over 80 national organizations representing schools, students, health professionals, and communities dedicated to ensuring that the health 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) 2023, HPNEC encourages the subcommittee to adopt at least \$1.51 billion for HRSA Titles VII and VIII programs.**

The HRSA Title VII health professions and Title VIII nursing programs helped the country combat COVID-19, despite the new challenges the pandemic posed for grantees. 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. Additionally, the HRSA health professions and nursing workforce programs are structured to advance new delivery systems and models of care, such as promoting interprofessional teams and integrating mental health services with primary care.

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.

**Diversity Pathway Programs** –The COVID-19 pandemic pulled back the curtain on pervasive health inequities facing underserved communities and 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 pathway programs in strengthening students' academic records, improving test scores, and helping disadvantaged students pursue careers in the health professions. Title VII diversity pathway programs reached over 10,000 students in the 2020-2021 academic year (AY), with SDS graduating nearly 1,400 students and COE reaching more than 5,600 health professionals; 56% of which were 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 2020-21, the program supported more than 10,000 students, with approximately 47% of the training sites located in underserved communities and 41% in primary care settings.

**Primary Care Workforce** – The Primary Care Medicine Programs fortify our nation’s primary care workforce by training future clinicians, teachers, and researchers who practice as general pediatricians, general internists, family medicine practitioners, 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 2020-2021, 62% of PCTE programs were 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. Through grants, the program develops partnerships among institutions, federally recognized tribes, and community-based organizations to train medical students to provide care that improves health outcomes for those living on tribal reservations or in rural and underserved communities. In AY 2020-21, awardees of this program trained 1,089 students, 38% of whom were from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Interdisciplinary, Community Based Linkages** – 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 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 2020-21, BHWET grantees provided over 1.3 million hours of behavioral health services, and 90% of GPE grantees provided telehealth services and 76% offered substance use disorder treatment services.

Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) support the recruitment and training of future physicians in rural areas, respond to local health needs, and serve as a crucial link between academic training programs and community-based outreach programs. In AY 2020-21, AHECs supported 168,000 pathway program participants, provided over 27,000 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 1,857 unique continuing education courses to over 520,000 faculty and practicing professionals in AY 2020-21, including 721 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, with a focus 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 2020-2021, the Title VIII Advanced Education Nursing programs supported more than 4,000 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 2020-2021, Public Health Workforce grantees delivered 2,901 unique continuing education courses to 343,887 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 nine 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 2023 appropriations bill for HRSA's Title VII and VIII programs to continue the nation's investment in our health workforce.