



Testimony of Cheryl Fattibene, Chief Nurse Practitioner, submitted on behalf of the National Nurse-Led Care Consortium

Prepared for the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Health Resources Services Administration and the National Institute for Nursing Research

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On behalf of the National Nurse-Led Care Consortium (NNCC), I would like to thank the members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the importance of fully funding nursing workforce programs and how these programs impact nurses working in nurse-led models of care. **Specifically, NNCC requests that \$266 million be appropriated for the Nursing Workforce Development Programs (authorized under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.]), and \$170 million be appropriated for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR).**

NNCC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public health organization that seeks to advance all forms of nurse-led care through policy development, technical assistance, and innovative programing. Nurse-led care exists at the intersection of multidisciplinary healthcare, where nurses have a transformative role as holistic caregivers, advocates, and leaders. Nurses have unique skills and insight to treat the whole person, serving as a critical connection between compassionate and evidence-based healthcare. Because of their education and community connections, advanced practice nurses are able to deliver high quality and cost-effective services to our most vulnerable populations.

Primarily, nurse practitioners run the health centers and practices NNCC represents. Nurse practitioners and other advanced practice nurses offer patient-centered care that is sensitive to patient needs and concerns. They work in all types of healthcare settings and specialties, such as retail health and acute care, but their services primarily revolve around primary care. NNCC assists these nurses by advocating for policy reforms that increase access to nurse-led care, designing community-based programs that address public health needs and offering expert technical assistance that enhances the sustainability of innovative nurse-led practice models.

As part of its mission, NNCC represents nonprofit, nurse-managed health clinics (sometimes called nurse-managed health centers or NMHCs). Section 254c-1a of the Public Health Service Act defines the term 'nurse-managed health clinic' as a "nurse-practice arrangement, managed by advanced practice nurses, that provides primary care or wellness services to underserved or

vulnerable populations and that is associated with a school, college, university or department of nursing, federally qualified health center (FQHC), or independent nonprofit health or social services agency.”¹ Recent estimates indicate that there are approximately 500 nurse-managed clinics nationwide, including birthing centers and school-based clinics. There are also approximately 2,500 nurse-led retail clinics based in pharmacies, grocery stores and other retail outlets around the country. Nurse-led models of care offer a full range of health services, including health promotion and disease prevention, to low-income, underinsured, and uninsured clients.

Because many nurse-led models of care are affiliated with schools of nursing, these clinics also help to build the capacity of the community-based health care workforce by acting as teaching and practice sites for nursing students and other health professionals. Each clinic associated with a nursing institution provides clinical placements for an average of 50 to 60 students a year.² These students include graduate and undergraduate nursing students, as well as medical, physician assistant, and social work students, among others.³ Students participating in post-clinical focus groups express a high level of satisfaction with NMHC-based clinical placements, commenting that their experience in NMHCs highlighted the need to reduce health care disparities and respect patient diversity. A large percentage of the federal funding for academically-affiliated NMHCs comes from the Title VIII Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention (NEPQR) program. Granting the requested appropriation will help ensure NMHCs and others forms of nurse-led care can continue taking advantage of the NEPQR program. Nurse-led clinical placements are particularly important to nursing education, because they offer nursing students hands-on experience working in underserved communities. These clinical placement sites also provide students with the opportunity to form relationships with nurse mentors working in leadership roles that can help build important business development and practice management skills often underemphasized in traditional nursing school curriculums.

One good example of the benefit of Title VIII funding to nurse-led clinics comes from the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing, which received a \$999,101 grant from the NEPQR program in 2017. The two-year grant gives the Clinic at Mercury Courts, a nurse-managed primary care clinic located in one of Nashville’s most economically depressed areas, the resources to add a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, social worker, and psychiatrist to its existing primary care team. The rate of substance abuse and mood disorders experienced by the community served by this clinic is more than four times the national average. The additional providers enable the clinic to comprehensively screen and treat both medical and behavioral health conditions, while addressing some of the problems associated with the deepening opioid crisis. In addition to its clinical services, the Mercury Courts clinic strengthens nursing education by offering clinical placements to nursing, medical, pharmacy, social work, and physician assistant students from a variety of disciplines and schools, including Lipscomb University, Tennessee State University, Trevecca Nazarene University, University of

¹ Section 5208 of the Affordable Care Act

² NNCC membership survey

³ NNCC membership survey

Tennessee, and Vanderbilt's College of Arts and Science, Owen Graduate School of Management, Peabody College and Schools of Nursing, Divinity, Law and Medicine.

Title VIII funding is crucial to the success of the Mercury Court clinic, as well as hundreds of others like it across the nation. For this reason, NNCC again requests that the Subcommittee appropriate \$266 million to support Title VIII programs.

With regard to the National Institute of Nursing Research, NNCC believes that fully funding nursing research is vital to the recruitment and retention of qualified nursing faculty. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's report on 2016-2017 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing, U.S. nursing schools turned away 64,067 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2016 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints.⁴ Appropriating \$170 million to the National Institute of Nursing Research will ensure that there are adequate research opportunities available to attract and retain experienced nursing faculty, while also improving nursing practice and patient outcomes. These enhanced research opportunities, in conjunction with the increase in clinical placement sites created by nurse-led practices funded through the requested Title VIII appropriation, constitute a two-pronged strategy for alleviating the nursing faculty shortage.

NNCC once again thanks the members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to submit this testimony. If there any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 215-985-6252 or cfattibene@nncc.us.

Sincerely,

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⁴ American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Nursing Faculty Shortage Information Sheet, Available here: <http://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Nursing-Faculty-Shortage>