

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2003

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Labor-HHS Appropriations Sub-Committee

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS Appropriations Sub-Committee

We respectfully urge you to accept a provision in the Senate version of the FY 2004 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act (H.R. 2660) that provides an additional \$50 million in needed funds for nursing education and recruitment, setting an overall funding level of \$163 million for Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act for FY 2004.

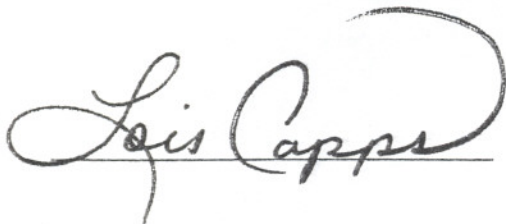
Our nation is struggling with a growing shortage of registered nurses (RNs) that impacts our patients in our hospitals, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, and public health clinics on a daily basis. This burgeoning shortage threatens the very fabric of our health care system.

The nursing shortage is already directly affecting patient care. A recent survey of hospitals across the nation concluded nursing shortages are causing emergency department overcrowding, emergency department diversions, increased wait times for surgery, discontinued patient care programs or reduced service hours, delayed discharges, and canceled surgeries. In addition, numerous recent studies have detailed the relationship between nursing staffing levels and quality patient care.

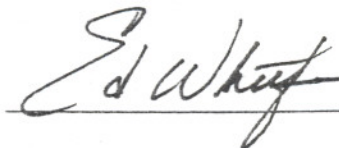
Last year, Congress took the critical step of passing the Nurse Reinvestment Act (PL 107-205), which expanded and improved the nursing workforce development programs of Title VIII. This legislation holds the promise of attracting more people into the nursing profession, increasing the capacity for nurse education, and encouraging practicing nurses to remain in the profession. However, the promise of these programs will prove empty without adequate new appropriations.

We strongly urge you to complete the promise of the Nurse Reinvestment Act. Your support for \$163 million for the nurse workforce development programs of Title VIII contained in the Senate FY 2004 appropriations bill is crucial to addressing this looming crisis.

Sincerely



Lois Capps



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