

“LIVE”

STATEMENT OF SENATOR GORDON H. SMITH
ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NURSING EDUCATION AND QUALITY OF HEALTH
CARE ACT OF 2007
JUNE 12, 2007

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague Senator Clinton, in introducing this important piece of legislation to help alleviate the nursing shortage in our nation. This legislation will work to ensure that our nursing schools have increased capacity and the tools necessary to properly train nurses to enter into the workforce.

As many of my colleagues know, the shortage of nurses is a current and ever increasing problem in our nation. As baby boomers age and demands for health care continue to increase, we will further see a shortage of nurses, which is not sustainable for the health needs of our nation. While the number of graduates from nursing programs is increasing, we are still facing ongoing critical shortages and we must do better.

Incredibly, while we have an ever-increasing demand for nurses, we are also seeing our schools of nursing turn away scores of students each year who are viable candidates due to lack of capacity and lack of teaching staff. In fact, in my home state of Oregon, for each student position available in nursing programs, there are six applicants. This forces many young men and women who want to enter this field of work to give up on pursuing a nursing career. This is one of many reasons that we currently have 118,000 vacant positions for nurses nationwide – this translates to a national vacancy rate of 8.5 percent.

Our entire nation is on an aging trajectory in all areas, and the nursing workforce is no exception. In Oregon, nearly half of our nurses are age 50 or older, and the proportion of nurses over the age of 50 has doubled in the last 20 years. We also know that according to a survey in 2006, 55 percent of surveyed nurses reported their intention to retire between 2011 and 2020. Further, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) this will leave America with a deficit of more than one million nurses by the year 2020.

The bill that I am introducing today with Senator Clinton will provide grants to enhance rural nurse training programs by improving the technology infrastructure. It also will provide grants for nurse faculty development so that schools of nursing can increase the number of nursing faculty in their programs, thereby increasing the number of students they can accept into their programs. This bill also will encourage pipeline programs to help increase the number of rural residents who pursue nursing in their communities. Lastly, it will provide grants for partnerships that advance the education, delivery and measurement of quality and patient safety in nursing practices. These important provisions will help in the recruitment and training of nurses as well as work towards enhanced quality and safety of nursing across the nation.

I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this bill, and I look forward to working with Chairman Kennedy and other members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to secure its passage.

Thank you.

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To increase the number of well-educated nurses, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. CLINTON introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To increase the number of well-educated nurses, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Nursing Education
5 and Quality of Health Care Act of 2007”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The current nursing workforce is the largest
9 group of healthcare providers in the United States.

10 (2) There will be a need for 1,200,000 new and
11 replacement nurses by 2014.

1 (3) Over 38,000 qualified applicants were
2 turned away from entry-level nursing programs lead-
3 ing to a baccalaureate degree in 2006. This number
4 increases to 147,000 when all schools of nursing are
5 taken into account.

6 (4) Insufficient numbers of faculty is the pri-
7 mary reason given by schools of nursing for not ac-
8 cepting qualified applicants.

9 (5) The average age of doctorally-prepared
10 nurse faculty is almost 56 years old.

11 (6) Nurses are the healthcare providers most
12 likely to intercept medication errors before the errors
13 reach patients and result in adverse events.

14 (7) Employing a greater proportion of more
15 highly educated nurses may reduce the rates of pa-
16 tient mortality.

17 **SEC. 3. RURAL NURSES TRAINING GRANT PROGRAM.**

18 Part D of title VIII of the Public Health Service Act
19 (42 U.S.C. 296p) is amended by adding at the end the
20 following:

21 **“SEC. 832. RURAL NURSES TRAINING GRANT PROGRAM.**

22 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
23 grants to, or enter into contracts with, eligible entities for
24 the purpose of educating nurses to serve in rural areas
25 and areas of nurse specialty shortage.

1 “(b) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
2 a grant under this section shall use grant funds to develop
3 distance learning education by—

4 “(1) providing technology infrastructure to en-
5 hance or increase—

6 “(A) broadband connectivity; and

7 “(B) education rooms wired for the Inter-
8 net;

9 “(2) providing technology infrastructure for a
10 video conferencing network;

11 “(3) recruiting, training, and supporting com-
12 munity-based faculty for classroom and clinical
13 training; or

14 “(4) recruiting and supporting community-
15 based sites for clinical training.

16 “(c) ANALYSES.—Not later than 1 year after the Sec-
17 retary awards grants under subsection (a), and annually
18 thereafter, the Secretary, working with the Administrator
19 of the Health Resources and Services Administration and
20 appropriate nursing agencies, shall collect and perform
21 analyses on the number of nurses in the United States
22 to track rural nursing trends.

23 “(d) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date
24 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall generate an
25 annual report about the status of the nursing workforce

1 in the United States and shall disseminate the report as
2 the Secretary determines appropriate.

3 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
4 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
5 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
6 2008 through 2012.”.

7 **SEC. 4. NURSE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT.**

8 (a) NURSE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.—
9 Part D of title VIII of the Public Health Service Act (42
10 U.S.C. 296p et seq.) is amended by inserting after section
11 832 (as added by section 3) the following:

12 **“SEC. 833. NURSE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.**

13 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through
14 the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services
15 Administration, shall award grants to eligible entities for
16 the establishment and operation of demonstration projects
17 that will expand the numbers of nurse faculty within
18 schools of nursing, including—

19 “(1) developing recruitment programs for
20 nurses with academic credentials for faculty status
21 who are not teaching at the time;

22 “(2) offering scholarships that facilitate the re-
23 turn of registered nurses to a school of nursing on
24 a part-time basis for graduate education that leads
25 to a career in nursing education;

1 “(3) providing additional education to enable
2 nurses with graduate degrees to serve as faculty by
3 obtaining teaching certificates;

4 “(4) developing accelerated doctoral programs
5 that will facilitate entry in a nursing faculty posi-
6 tion;

7 “(5) developing online continuing education
8 courses and practice teaching opportunities for nurse
9 faculty; and

10 “(6) developing research internships and fellow-
11 ships for nursing students at academic medical cen-
12 ters to foster interest in academic research.

13 “(b) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date
14 of enactment of the Nursing Education and Quality of
15 Health Care Act of 2007, the Comptroller General of the
16 United States shall prepare and submit a report to Con-
17 gress that—

18 “(1) addresses the causes of the nurse faculty
19 shortage; and

20 “(2) makes recommendations to increase the
21 numbers and the retention of nurse faculty mem-
22 bers.

23 “(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
24 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section

1 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
2 2008 through 2012.”.

3 (b) DOCTORAL PROGRAMS.—Section 811(f)(2) of the
4 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 296j(f)(2)) is
5 amended by striking the period at the end and inserting
6 “, except that in the case of a nurse faculty shortage, the
7 Secretary may, in the Secretary’s discretion, obligate more
8 than 10 percent of such traineeships for individuals in doc-
9 toral degree programs.”.

10 **SEC. 5. DEVELOPING THE RURAL NURSING WORKFORCE.**

11 Part C of title VIII of the Public Health Service Act
12 (42 U.S.C. 296m) is amended by adding at the end the
13 following:

14 **“SEC. 822. DEVELOPING THE RURAL NURSING WORK-**
15 **FORCE.**

16 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
17 grants to, and enter into contracts with, eligible entities
18 to increase the nursing opportunities for individuals who
19 reside in rural communities. The activities funded under
20 this section shall include—

21 “(1) increasing and expanding pipeline pro-
22 grams, including—

23 “(A) mathematics and science programs;

24 “(B) Nurse Medical Academy of Science
25 and Health (MASH) Camp and other health ca-

1 reer pipeline programs for middle school and
2 secondary school students tied to higher edu-
3 cation curricula;

4 “(C) nurse mentor programs that provide
5 experience for secondary school students in clin-
6 ical settings to learn about the nursing profes-
7 sion;

8 “(D) training for middle school and sec-
9 ondary school guidance counselors; and

10 “(E) programs that attract nontraditional
11 nursing students, including minorities and men;

12 “(2) supporting a web-based healthcare work-
13 force development system that will be a database-
14 driven website to connect employers, educators, rural
15 communities, and students with the nursing pipeline
16 and recruitment programs described in this section;
17 and

18 “(3) increasing the program capacity of acceler-
19 ated registered nurse programs that recruit individ-
20 uals with baccalaureate degrees in other fields into
21 baccalaureate or graduate degree nursing programs
22 that serve rural communities, by—

23 “(A) increasing the number of faculty;

24 “(B) increasing clinical training sites; and

1 “(C) providing financial incentives, includ-
2 ing loan forgiveness and tuition assistance for
3 nurses who practice in rural areas.

4 “(b) AWARD BASIS.—

5 “(1) AWARD BASIS FOR FIRST 2 YEARS.—For
6 each of the first 2 fiscal years for which funds are
7 appropriated under subsection (c), the Secretary
8 shall, to the extent practicable—

9 “(A) use 80 percent of such funds to
10 award grants under this section to carry out the
11 activity described in subsection (a)(3); and

12 “(B) use 20 percent of such funds to
13 award grants under this section to carry out the
14 activities described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of
15 subsection (a).

16 “(2) AWARD BASIS FOR SUBSEQUENT YEARS.—

17 For each fiscal year following the first 2 fiscal years
18 for which funds are appropriated under subsection
19 (c), the Secretary shall, in awarding grants under
20 this section, arrange for such distribution of funds
21 and grants to carry out the various activities de-
22 scribed in subsection (a) as the Secretary determines
23 appropriate.

24 “(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
25 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section

1 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
2 2008 through 2012.”.

3 **SEC. 6. NURSING AND THE QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE.**

4 Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act (42
5 U.S.C. 296 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the
6 following:

7 **“PART J—NURSING AND IMPROVING**
8 **HEALTHCARE**

9 **“SEC. 861. LINKING NURSING EDUCATION AND QUALITY**
10 **OUTCOMES PROGRAM.**

11 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in collaboration
12 with the Administrator of the Health Resources and Serv-
13 ices Administration and the Director of the Agency for
14 Healthcare Research and Quality, shall award grants to
15 entities that meet the requirements of subsection (b) to
16 enable the entities to carry out demonstration projects
17 that advance the education, delivery, or measurement of
18 quality and patient safety in nursing practice.

19 “(b) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a dem-
20 onstration project grant under this section, an entity
21 shall—

22 “(1) be a school of nursing, a nursing center,
23 an academic health center, a State or local govern-
24 ment, or any other public or private nonprofit entity
25 determined appropriate by the Secretary;

1 “(2) submit to the Secretary an application in
2 accordance with section 802;

3 “(3) form a partnership with 1 or more eligible
4 entities; and

5 “(4) submit a plan to the Secretary that
6 assures grant funds received under this section will
7 be used to support the implementation and evalua-
8 tion of healthcare quality improvement activities that
9 include—

10 “(A) with respect to healthcare systems,
11 activities relating to improving patient safety,
12 timeliness of care, effectiveness of care, equity
13 and efficiency of care, and patient-centeredness;
14 or

15 “(B) with respect to patients, activities, in-
16 cluding activities relating to staying healthy,
17 getting well, living with illness or disability, and
18 coping with end of life issues.

19 “(c) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under sub-
20 section (a), the Secretary shall give priority to entities that
21 will carry out 1 or more of the following:

22 “(1) IMPLEMENTATION.—Implementing initia-
23 tives in professional nursing education to enhance
24 patient safety efforts through evidence-based prac-
25 tice and quality improvement strategies by—

1 “(A) developing partnerships between ac-
2 credited schools of nursing and health care fa-
3 cilities, as defined in section 801, to educate
4 registered nurses in clinical leadership, inter-
5 disciplinary team management, systems admin-
6 istration, outcomes and risk management, and
7 education, for implementation in multiple
8 healthcare settings; and

9 “(B) providing scholarships for registered
10 professional nurses to pursue advanced nursing
11 education in accordance with subsection (a).

12 “(2) EDUCATION.—Integrating quality and
13 safety competencies into nursing education programs
14 by—

15 “(A) disseminating patient safety edu-
16 cation content to a nurse faculty administrator
17 to integrate quality competencies into each
18 school of nursing that are consistent with tech-
19 nical standards that are developed or adopted
20 by voluntary consensus standards bodies under
21 section 12(d) of the National Technology
22 Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 (15
23 U.S.C. 272 note); and

24 “(B) developing ongoing web-based mod-
25 ules for continued nurse faculty education to

1 bring research evidence into practice not later
2 than 2 years after receiving a grant under this
3 section; and

4 “(3) provide continuing education for practicing
5 nurses, including—

6 “(A) developing web-based modules related
7 to patient safety, including topics of evidenced-
8 based practice, professional communication, pa-
9 tient or family-centered care, systems thinking,
10 informatics, collaborative practice, medication,
11 and practice error; and

12 “(B) developing systems for the dissemina-
13 tion of continuing education through facility-
14 based staff development and orientation.

15 “(d) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall award
16 grants to entities described in subsection (b) to collect
17 data and study the potential benefits of basic and ad-
18 vanced nursing education levels or certification status in
19 the efforts to promote quality improvement strategies and
20 enhance patient outcomes and cost saving measures, by—

21 “(1) compiling and analyzing quality indicator
22 data from existing databases and other sources to
23 evaluate relationships between basic and advanced
24 nursing education levels or certification status on
25 nursing sensitive indicators and quality outcomes;

1 “(2) working in consultation with State depart-
2 ments of health or other nonprofit patient safety or-
3 ganizations; or

4 “(3) demonstrating the cost savings and sus-
5 tainability of the demonstration projects.

6 “(e) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date
7 of enactment of the Nursing Education and Quality of
8 Health Care Act of 2007, the Secretary shall submit a
9 report to Congress on the results of the program under
10 this section.

11 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
12 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
13 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
14 2008 through 2012.”.