

June 7, 2007: Sanchez Introduces Nurse Loan Forgiveness Program

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Bill would help address the severe shortage of registered nurses

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Yesterday, U.S. Representative Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) introduced H.R. 2572, The Nurse Loan Forgiveness Act of 2007 that would forgive up to \$17,000 in federal loans over a five-year period for people that have been working for at least a year as full-time registered nurses, and for experienced nurses with advanced degrees that are educating new nurses.

H.R. 2572 would help alleviate the severe shortage of nurses in the healthcare industry and expand the supply, and help provide for the education of registered nurses. According to The Journal of the American Medical Association, the United States will have a shortage of more than 400,000 nurses by the year 2020.

"Nurses play a principle role in healthcare delivery in a variety of settings -- from hospitals, home health agencies and long-term care facilities, to managed care centers, and community health clinics," said Sanchez.

"Advances in patient care and emphasis on preventative care are causing the great growth in demand for nurses. However the economic hurdle to obtain a degree in nursing drives many away from the profession and in to more lucrative pursuits. It is my hope that this temporary program will help to alleviate some of the projected effects of the increased need of our population."

According to the American Nurses Association, the Nurse Loan Forgiveness Act of 2007 will help address this shortage by increasing the supply of nursing faculty and by helping to defray the considerable costs of a nursing education. The shortage of nursing faculty is a significant contributor to the nursing shortage. Schools of nursing were forced to turn away nearly 150,000 qualified applicants in the 2005-06 academic year. The major reason cited for this lack of capacity is the lack of nursing faculty.

"Representative Sanchez's legislation will help address this problem by providing loan repayments to nursing faculty. In addition, the loan repayments for nurses working in patient care will encourage more students to consider a career in nursing, and will help new nurses defray their educational expenses," said Rose Gonzalez, MPS, RN, Director of Government Affairs for the American Nurses Association.

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