

Background

A fundamental shift has occurred in the registered nurse workforce over the last two decades. As occupational opportunities for young women have expanded and the working conditions for nurses have deteriorated, the number of young people entering nursing schools has declined. Through the mid-to-late 1990's, the General Accounting Office reports a 20% decline in baccalaureate degree enrollments, 11% decline in associate degree enrollments, and 42% decline in diploma degree enrollments. Projections show there will be a national shortage of nurses in the next 8 to 10 years if nothing is done to alleviate the pressures that are driving nurses out of the profession and entice young people into choosing nursing as a career.

Nursing Education Incentives

States enacted the following legislation in 2003: **AR** passed two bills, the first reestablished the Nursing Student Loan Revolving Fund and the second established a legislative commission to study the nursing shortage. **CA** legislation requires the Office of Statewide Planning and Development to establish a statewide Associate Degree Nursing Scholarship Pilot Program. **FL** legislation will establish the North Brevard Co. Hospital District Board and a training school for nurses. A **GA** bill will provide financial assistance to students, postgraduate trainees or parents for programs of study in fields with personnel shortages. **HI**'s bill creates a nurses education loan program of up to \$10,000 per student per year along with a special fund. **IN** legislation extends the date for a report from the Commission on Excellence in Health to October 31, 2004. **LA** legislation provides that certain students studying to become qualified to teach nursing to be eligible for a loan repayment program. **MS** also approved two bills, both pertain to the enactment of a paid educational leave program, one for hospital employees working in sponsoring hospitals, the other for employees of state health institutions. These programs stipulate that the employee must agree to return to the same institution to practice for the equivalent time period as leave taken but no less than two years. Default on these contracts could lead to loss of license. **NH** legislation combines the states career incentive program and the nursing leveraged scholarship loan program within the Department of Postsecondary Education and establishes a workforce incentive program. **NV** enacted a bill creating a Committee to Evaluate Higher Education that will study areas of high priority areas including education programs for students who desire to become nurses or teachers. **OR** enacted a bill directing the Oregon Health and Science University to distribute grants to post-secondary institutions to expand the capacity of nursing education programs. **OR** also passed a resolution that urges the Governor to allocate money under the Federal Workforce Investment Act for training of providers to alleviate the shortage of nurses. **SD** decided to expand their nurse tuition reimbursement program to include recruitment incentive payments of \$5,000 to other health care professionals provided they practice full-time in an eligible facility for a minimum of two years. **TX** legislation requires the TX Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt procedures for assuring money to fund enrollment growth for nursing programs, grants for faculty, innovations, retention and critical shortage areas. It also creates the Nurse Advisory Committee and adds an RN to the State Council and establishes a nurse resource section within the health profession resource center. **VA** has enacted a bill that requires the State Council of Higher Education to develop with the Board of Nursing and the Advisory Council on the Future of Nursing, a strategic plan to ensure adequate supply of nurses and must address issues regarding education, recruitment and retention. The Council shall recommend changes in public policy necessary to meet the need for nursing services to the General Assembly. **WY** agreed to establish a program that encourages nursing education, provides eligibility criteria and loan administration for nursing students, requires the community college commission to coordinate nurse education programs, and specifies the conditions for funding additional teaching positions.

In 2002, significant legislation included the following: **AZ** legislation established a five year plan to increase the number of nurses who graduate from nursing programs in Arizona. **CA** decided to

standardize all nursing program prerequisites, admission requirements and corequisites on a statewide basis. **CO** passed two bills, the first directs the state to develop admission policies for nursing programs at state schools to allow for more students and subject to monies in the More Nurses for CO fund. The second bill creates a 3-year direct care provider career path pilot program. Two bills in **FL** one authorizes the Department of Health to make payments to nursing graduates of up to \$4,000 per year for up to four years who practice in designated facilities. Another creates a grant program for school districts to establish an exploratory nursing program in middle schools and a career and technical education program in high schools to promote a seamless transition to post secondary education or employment. **IA** created a nurse recruitment program with funds to be administered by the College Student Aid Commission. **KY** legislation creates the Nursing Workforce Foundation to provide funding and award grants to nursing education programs and nursing employers for the recruitment of students and the training of registered nurses who are pursuing advanced degrees to become nursing faculty. **LA** passed two bills, one establishes a commission to address, among other things, the education of future health care workers while the second bill is a study to develop a special high school curriculum in medical sciences. **MI** agreed to authorize the disbursement of funds to nursing scholarship programs and in a second bill, created a nursing school program that awards \$4,000 for each year a student is in the program (funded through the tobacco settlement). Two **SD** bills revise provisions regarding the nurses' education assistance loan program by funding tuition reimbursement (\$5,000) for nurses upon practicing for two years and makes an appropriation to expand the nursing programs at South Dakota's public universities. **VA** legislation allows part-time nursing students to be eligible for scholarship and loan repayment programs, while **WV** legislation creates a scholarship program for persons pursuing a master's degree in nursing (\$10,000) or a fourth year medical student (\$20,000) who agrees to practice at least two years in a medically underserved area in West Virginia or a nurse who agrees to teach two years for a school of nursing.