



Department of Education's Loan Proposal Puts Nursing Workforce and Patient Care at Risk

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200,000 Nurses and Patients Urge the Department of Education to Protect Graduate Nursing Education and Access to Care

SILVER SPRING, MD – November 26, 2025 – The American Nurses Association (ANA) is deeply concerned by the Department of Education's recent statements of "myth vs. fact" that minimize the potential adverse impact of federal loan eligibility rules under consideration by the Department.

There is bipartisan concern about the harm this proposal would cause to the nursing workforce and, by extension, patients' access to healthcare. Across party lines, policymakers recognize that nurses are the backbone of the nation's healthcare delivery system and that advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) are critical to closing the nation's gaps in access to primary care, maternal health, behavioral health, and other specialty care.

"Americans should be very concerned about the impact of this proposal on patient care. For example, advanced practice nurses, including nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse midwives are board certified and highly educated. Their post-baccalaureate 'graduate' studies lead to professional licensure as a healthcare provider. In many communities, they provide access to patient care that would otherwise be unavailable," said ANA President Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, PhD, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN.

The Department of Education's Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) committee's exclusion of graduate level nursing education as a professional degree program would stand in contrast to other positive actions by the administration, which have actively supported advanced practice nursing. For example, [the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Rural Transformation Grants](#) specifically invested in expanding the reach of advanced practice nurses in rural communities who often rely solely on nurses for access to care. The Department of Education's proposal undermines this important progress promoted by the Department of Health and Human Services.



There was not a single nurse representative on the RISE committee, and their recommendation was based on an antiquated list that does not meet the reality of the 21st century—that APRNs are licensed healthcare providers.

“Our nation is also confronting a nurse faculty crisis,” added Dr. Mensik Kennedy. “In 2022, nursing schools reported more than 2,100 full-time faculty vacancies. These faculty vacancies resulted in over 80,000 qualified student applications being turned away. Without adequate faculty, we simply cannot educate the nurses America needs, let alone expand the advanced practice workforce that healthcare requires. Restricting graduate nursing students’ access to federal loans would only deepen this crisis by discouraging nurses from pursuing the advanced degrees required to teach the next generation.”

Recent data from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) [underscores the urgency of this faculty shortage](#). With a significant portion of faculty approaching retirement, the pipeline of educators is under real threat.

According to [data from the National Center for Education Statistics](#), the cost of attendance for nurses pursuing graduate degrees on average is over \$30,000 per year, which exceeds the proposed annual cap of \$20,500 per year. In addition, [the National Academy of Medicine recently stated that](#) “support for education and training needs in the nursing profession, including the pursuit of higher degrees, is widely recognized as among the highest priorities for our nation’s health system.”

Nurses can make responsible financial decisions about their education, and they deserve the same respect and support afforded to the other included professionals. Advanced practice nursing degrees are in high demand and have a high return on investment, allowing borrowers to repay their loans consistently.

In the past few days, more than 200,000 nurses and patients have signed ANA’s petition calling on the Department of Education to modify the policy before issuing the proposed rule. We encourage everyone to visit [RNAction.org](#) to make their voice heard and [sign the petition](#).

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About the American Nurses Association

As the oldest organization representing more than 5 million registered nurses, the American Nurses Association stands at the forefront of advancing nursing excellence. The association harnesses The Power of Nurses™ to champion the profession and drive transformation in healthcare. Through legislative and political advocacy, comprehensive educational services, and the profession’s leading Code of Ethics and



Scope and Standards, the association empowers nurses across every specialty and practice setting. The association is committed to ensuring healthy work environments, shaping pioneering policies, and cultivating partnerships that enhance both the nursing profession and the broader healthcare experience.

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