

Statutory Language:

SEC. 1121. NURSING SCHOOL CAPACITY.

(a) Findings- Congress finds the following:

(1) Researchers in the field of public health have identified the need for a national study to identify constraints encountered by schools of nursing in graduating the number of nurses sufficient to meet the health care needs of the United States.

(2) The shortage of qualified registered nurses has adversely affected the health care system of the United States.

(3) Individual States have had varying degrees of success with programs designed to increase the recruitment and retention of nurses.

(4) Schools of nursing have been unable to provide a sufficient number of qualified graduates to meet the workforce needs.

(5) Many nurses are approaching the age of retirement, and the problem worsens each year.

(6) In 2004, an estimated 125,000 applications from qualified applicants were rejected by schools of nursing, due to a shortage of faculty and a lack of capacity for additional students.

(b) Study With Respect to Constraints With Respect to Schools of Nursing-

(1) IN GENERAL- The Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a study for the purpose of--

(A) identifying constraints encountered by schools of nursing in admitting and graduating the number of registered nurses necessary to ensure patient safety and meet the need for quality assurance in the provision of health care; and

(B) developing recommendations to alleviate the constraints on a short-term and long-term basis.

(2) CERTAIN COMPONENTS- The Secretary shall ensure that the agreement under paragraph (1) provides that the study under such paragraph will include information on the following:

(A) The trends in applications for attendance at schools of nursing that are relevant to the purpose of the study, including trends regarding applicants who are accepted for enrollment and applicants who are not accepted, particularly qualified applicants who are not accepted.

(B) The number and demographic characteristics of entry-level and graduate students currently enrolled in schools of nursing, the retention rates at the schools, and the number of recent graduates from the schools, as compared to previous years and to the projected need for registered nurses based on two-year, five-year, and ten-year projections.

(C) The number and demographic characteristics of nurses who pursue graduate education in nursing and non-nursing programs but do not pursue faculty positions in schools of nursing, the reasons for not pursuing faculty positions, including any regulatory barriers to choosing to pursue such positions, and the effect of such decisions on the ability of the schools to obtain adequate numbers of faculty members.

(D) The extent to which--

(i) entry-level graduates of the schools of nursing are satisfied with their educational preparation, including their participation in nurse externships, internships, and residency programs; and

(ii) such entry-level graduates are able to effectively transition into the nursing workforce.

(E) The satisfaction of nurse managers and administrators with respect to the preparation and performance levels of entry-level graduates from the schools after one year, three years, and five years of practice, respectively.

(F) The extent to which the current salary, benefit structures, and characteristics of the workplace, including the number of nurses who are presently serving in faculty positions, influence the career path of nurses who have pursued graduate education.

(G) The extent to which the use of innovative technologies for didactic and clinical nursing education might provide for an increase in the ability of schools of nursing to train qualified nurses.

(3) RECOMMENDATIONS- The Institute of Medicine may include in the recommendations developed under paragraph (1)(B) recommendations for legislative or administrative changes at the Federal or State level, and measures that can be taken in the private sector--

(A) to facilitate the recruitment of students into the nursing profession;

(B) to facilitate the retention of nurses in the workplace; and

(C) to improve the resources and ability of the education and health care systems to prepare a sufficient number of qualified registered nurses.

(4) METHODOLOGY OF STUDY-

(A) SCOPE- The Secretary shall ensure that the agreement under paragraph (1) provides that the study under such paragraph will consider the perspectives of--

(i) nurses and physicians in each of the various types of inpatient, outpatient, and residential facilities in the health care delivery system;

(ii) faculty and administrators of schools of nursing;

(iii) providers of health plans or health insurance; and

(iv) consumers.

(B) CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT ORGANIZATION- The Secretary shall ensure that the agreement under paragraph (1) provides that relevant agencies and organizations with expertise on the nursing shortage will be consulted with respect to the study under such paragraph, including the following:

(i) The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

(ii) The American Academy of Nursing.

(iii) The American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

(iv) The American Nurses Association.

(v) The American Organization of Nurse Executives.

(vi) The National Institute of Nursing Research.

(vii) The National League for Nursing.

(viii) The National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing.

(ix) The National Student Nurses Association.

(5) REPORT- The Secretary shall ensure that the agreement under paragraph (1) provides that, not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this section, the Institute of Medicine shall submit a report providing the findings and recommendations made in the study under this section to the Secretary and the authorizing committees.

(6) OTHER ORGANIZATION- If the Institute of Medicine declines to conduct the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary may enter into an agreement with another appropriate private entity to conduct the study.

(c) Definitions- In this section:

(1) TERMS IN PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE ACT- The terms “collegiate school of nursing”, “associate degree school of nursing” and “diploma school of nursing” have the meanings given to such terms in section 801 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 296).

(2) SCHOOL OF NURSING- The term “school of nursing” means a collegiate school of nursing, an associate degree school of nursing, or a diploma school of nursing in a State.

(3) SECRETARY- The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Education.