



National Association of Hispanic Nurses: Call to Action

Nurses can help mitigate the workforce shortages that may result from the DOE proposal by leading coordinated, solutions-focused advocacy efforts with legislators, universities, workforce boards, and healthcare systems. This is a defining moment for nurses to serve not only as clinicians, but also as advocates for the future of healthcare access.

- **Engage legislators:** Nurses should emphasize that redefining nursing as a non-professional degree could restrict access to graduate-level financial aid and weaken pathways to becoming advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), nurse faculty, researchers, and clinical leaders. Policymakers should be urged to protect graduate nursing education by expanding loan forgiveness programs, increasing graduate-level scholarships, and safeguarding funding for advanced practice nursing education.
- **Partner with workforce boards and health systems:** Nurses can help quantify the regional workforce and economic consequences of limiting advanced nursing education. By elevating employer testimony, workforce data, and patient care impacts, healthcare leaders can present unified recommendations that protect advanced nursing pathways.

By aligning messaging, sharing real-world stories, and highlighting the risks to healthcare access, nurses can build a strong cross-sector coalition dedicated to protecting the nursing workforce and ensuring continued access to high-quality care for all communities.

Talking Points

Protecting the Nursing Workforce Under the DOE Proposal

1. The RISE proposal could unintentionally worsen the nursing shortage.

Redefining nursing as a non-professional degree may restrict access to graduate-level loans, making it more difficult for students to pursue MSN, DNP, and PhD education. This threatens the pipeline of APRNs, nurse faculty, researchers, and clinical leaders—roles that are already in critically short supply nationwide.

2. Reduced access to graduate financing will weaken the faculty pipeline.

Without educators, there can be no future nursing workforce. Nursing programs already turn away qualified applicants due to shortages of faculty and clinical instructors. Limiting financial support for graduate nursing students will further reduce the number of nurses prepared to teach, worsening long-term workforce capacity.

3. Rural and underserved communities will be disproportionately impacted.

APRNs provide essential primary care, maternal health, and behavioral health services in rural and medically underserved communities. Policies that limit access to advanced nursing education will directly reduce healthcare access in areas already facing significant provider shortages. *(Incorporate local data on healthcare access, chronic disease burden, and provider shortages when possible.)*

4. Legislators can help protect the nursing workforce through loan forgiveness programs.

Expanding state and federal loan forgiveness programs for nurses—particularly APRNs, nurse faculty, and providers serving rural and underserved communities—can help offset the financial barriers created by the DOE proposal and preserve strong workforce pathways.

5. Accelerated 3-year BSN pathways should be considered.

Supporting high-quality accelerated BSN programs can help increase the number of practice-ready nurses more quickly without compromising educational standards. These models may also create opportunities for stronger K–12 to nursing career pipeline programs that address long-term workforce demand.

6. Graduate-level nursing scholarships are essential.

State-supported scholarships for MSN, DNP, and PhD students are critical to sustaining the future nursing workforce, including advanced practice nurses, educators, researchers, and healthcare leaders, especially if federal financing structures change.

7. Alignment with workforce boards and health systems is critical.

Regional workforce data consistently demonstrate that advanced practice nurses and nurse faculty are essential to maintaining healthcare capacity. Policies that restrict access to advanced nursing education will have measurable impacts on healthcare delivery, workforce stability, and regional economies.

8. We are asking for your partnership to protect nursing pathways by:

- Maintaining nursing's recognition as a professional degree and preserving access to appropriate graduate loan limits.
- Protecting access to graduate-level nursing financing at the state and federal levels.
- Expanding loan forgiveness and scholarship opportunities for nursing students and faculty.
- Strengthening the APRN and nurse faculty pipeline through policies that support education, recruitment, retention, and full practice authority where appropriate.
- Supporting innovative and accelerated nursing education pathways that maintain educational quality while addressing workforce shortages.