

April 9, 2018

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), we urge you to consider the important role APRNs have in delivering healthcare to patients throughout the country and the need to ensure that no unintended financial hardships are created for APRN students as you continue your work to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act*, through the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act*.

The APRN community is comprised of organizations representing Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), experts in primary care, maternal and women's health; Clinical Nurse Specialists, (CNSs) offering acute, chronic, specialty and community healthcare services; Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), providing the full range of anesthesia services as well as chronic pain management; and Nurse Practitioners (NPs), delivering primary, specialized and community healthcare with over a billion patient visits last year.

Totaling more than 350,000 healthcare professionals, APRNs' primary goals are ensuring patient wellness and improving patient access to safe and cost-effective healthcare services. APRNs are achieving these goals by serving patients of all populations in every healthcare setting, including the rural and underserved, in all 50 states.

While each APRN role has its own required education and training requirements, all APRNs must have a graduate degree from a nationally accredited APRN program, certification by a nationally accredited nursing certification body, and be licensed by a state board of nursing. In 2016, there were an estimated 104,550 APRN students throughout the United States. Further, the employment growth of certain APRN workforce is expected to increase by 31 percent. Therefore, potential changes to graduate student loans will have a drastic impact on these students and ultimately the patients they will care for in the future.

With this in mind, we ask you to consider including APRNs in Section 465 of the PROSPER Act, relating to the disbursement of student loans, loan limits, interest rates, and loan fees. Under this section, graduate/professional students may receive a federal loan, capped at \$28,500 for one year or \$150,000 for the course of study. These limits, however, are raised for certain health fields.

- A student studying to be a doctor of allopathic medicine, doctor of osteopathic medicine, doctor of dentistry, doctor of veterinary medicine, doctor of optometry, doctor of podiatric medicine, doctor of naturopathic medicine, or doctor of naturopathy, may receive an additional \$20,000/year for a 9-month or \$26,667/year for a 12-month course of study.
- A student studying to be a doctor of pharmacy, doctor of chiropractic medicine, a physician's assistant, or receive a graduate degree in public health, doctoral degree in clinical psychology, or a masters or doctoral degree in health administration, may receive an additional \$12,500/year for a 9-month or \$16,667/year for a 12-month course.

In addition, these health professions students would be able to borrow up to an aggregate amount of \$235,500.

Current law does not include APRN students in these higher loan limits, despite their high utilization of federal student loans. Moreover, the PROSPER Act would impose capping the Grad PLUS program, preventing graduate students from borrowing up to the cost of attendance. This would unfortunately shunt graduate students to seek out private loans, which typically come with higher interest rates than federal counterparts. Therefore, we caution the committee from taking this step as it would put APRN students in a potentially precarious position of neither having Grad PLUS as a safety net, nor being included in the higher loan limit borrowing cohort.

We ask that you address the concern of potentially undue financial hardship on APRN students, which in turn, would impact the pipeline's ability to provide high-quality care in all corners of the country.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this subject. If the APRN Community can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Ralph Kohl, at 202-741-9080 or rkohl@aanadc.com.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Nursing
 American Association of Colleges of Nursing
 American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
 American Association of Nurse Practitioners
 American College of Nurse-Midwives
 American Nurses Association
 American Organization of Nurse Executives
 National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
 National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
 National League for Nursing
 National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
 Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health