

May 16, 2007

The Honorable Senator/Representative
Senate/House Labor, Health and Human Services,
and Education Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515/20510

Dear Senator/Representative

As organizations dedicated to ensuring that individuals with cancer have access to high quality care, we respectfully request you support a FY 2008 allocation of \$200 million for implementation of the "Nurse Reinvestment Act" and the other nursing workforce development programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The Census Bureau projects the number of Americans 65 years and older will double between 2000 and 2030. Cancer principally is a disease of older Americans, and as such, the number of people with cancer and the population of cancer survivors are expected to increase significantly over the next 15 to 20 years. With an increasing number of people with cancer needing high quality health care – coupled with an inadequate nursing workforce – our nation could quickly face a cancer care crisis of serious proportion, with limited access to quality cancer care, particularly in traditionally underserved areas. Therefore, funding to implement and support the programs included in the enacted Nurse Reinvestment Act, as well as existing nursing workforce development programs must be secured.

A number of years ago, one of the most significant factors associated with the nursing shortage was a lack of interested and qualified applicants. However, due to the efforts of the nursing and cancer communities, the number of applicants is growing. Now, the greatest challenge is that the nation faces a serious shortage of faculty available to teach and train new nurses. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, in 2006 U.S. nursing schools turned away 42,866 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs due to insufficient number of faculty. Without adequate FY 2008 funding to support new nursing students and those interested in becoming faculty, we fear that our nation will fail to educate and train enough qualified oncology nurses who can provide quality cancer care to a growing populations of people in need.

Oncology nurses are front-line providers of cancer care administering chemotherapy, assisting patients undergoing radiation therapy, managing patient therapies and side-effects, working with insurance companies to ensure that patients receive the appropriate treatment, providing counseling to patients and family members, conducting cancer research and clinical trials, in addition to many other daily acts on behalf of cancer patients. With a shortage of nurses in cancer research, our war against cancer will take longer because of unfulfilled staffing needs coupled with the reality that in some practices and cancer centers, resources could be funneled away from cancer research to pay for the hiring and retention of oncology nurses to provide direct patient care.

By providing \$200 million in FY 2008 to federal nursing workforce programs Congress will be providing much-needed resources to help ease the nursing shortage and reduce its adverse

effect on patient care and cancer research. We thank you for your attention to this important appropriations request.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Prostate Cancer Prevention
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Association for Cancer Research
American Psychosocial Oncology Society
American Society for Clinical Oncology
American Society of Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
C-3 Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation
Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation
Colorectal Cancer Network
Community Oncology Alliance
Friends of Cancer Research
Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Cancer Advocacy Network
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
Lance Armstrong Foundation
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lung Cancer Alliance
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Malecare, Inc.
Men's Health Network
National Coalition for Cancer Research
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
Oncology Nurses Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
Susan G. Komen for the Cure
Trust for America's Health
United Ostomy Associations of America
US Oncology
Y-Me National Breast Cancer Organization