American Nurses Association

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November 10, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Thune, Leader Jeffries, and Leader Schumer:

As the 119th Congress draws to a close, the American Nurses Association (ANA) urges lawmakers to advance legislation addressing urgent challenges in our nation's healthcare system. These priorities are essential to strengthening the nursing workforce, removing unnecessary barriers to nursing practice, and protecting patients' timely access to affordable, high-quality healthcare services. Several of the legislative proposals outlined below have made meaningful progress in Congress, presenting an opportunity for lawmakers to build on that momentum and enact these important reforms before the end of the year:

- *Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2025* (H.R. 3593/S. 1874).
- *Nursing is a Professional Degree Act* (H.R. 8691/ S. 4568)
- *Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act* (H.R. 3170/S. 3296)
- *Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act* (H.R. 1616/S. 1805)
- *Improving Care and Access to Nurses (ICAN) Act* (H.R. 1317/S. 575)
- *Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act* (H.R. 3514/S. 1816)

**Reauthorize and Fund the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there will be approximately 180,800 openings for registered nurses (RNs) and 32,200 openings for certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), certified nurse midwives (CNMs), and nurse practitioners (NPs) annually through 2035, driven in part by retirements and workforce exits. Nursing workforce shortages pose significant risks to patient safety and quality of care, particularly when nurses are stretched too thin. To meet our nation's growing nursing workforce needs, ANA urges Congress to continue investing in nursing education and workforce development by passing the *Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2025* (H.R. 3593/S. 1874).

Last reauthorized in 2020, the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs are the only dedicated federal programs supporting nursing education from entry-level preparation through graduate study. These programs address critical workforce needs through education, practice, recruitment, and retention efforts while helping prepare nurses to meet the diverse health care needs of patients nationwide, particularly in rural and medically underserved communities. H.R.

3593/S. 1874 has already made progress in Congress, advancing through the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee in July 2026 and the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health in September 2025. ANA urges Congress to build on this bipartisan progress by reauthorizing the Title VIII programs before the end of the year and appropriating at least $610 million for these vital programs in FY 2027.

**Support Higher Loan Limits for Post-Baccalaureate Nursing Students**

The bipartisan *Nursing is a Professional Degree Act* (H.R. 8691/ S. 4568) would ensure that post-baccalaureate nursing degrees are recognized as professional degrees for purposes of federal student loan limits. Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21), graduate students face federal loan limits of $20,500 annually and $100,000 in total, compared to $50,000 annually and $200,000 in total for students pursuing professional degrees. The U.S. Department of Education's exclusion of graduate nursing programs from the professional degree classification creates additional financial barriers for nurses seeking advanced education. At a time when the nation faces persistent nursing workforce shortages and growing demand for advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), these restrictions could discourage nurses from pursuing graduate degrees, further strain the pipeline of nurse educators and researchers, and limit access to care, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Passage of this legislation would help ensure that federal student loan policies reflect the educational requirements of the nursing profession while strengthening the nursing workforce and preserving patient access to care.

**Remove Barriers to Care**

APRNs play a critical role in delivering high-quality, cost-effective care, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Yet, outdated federal laws and regulations continue to restrict their ability to provide services authorized under state scope-of-practice laws, creating unnecessary administrative burdens, delaying treatment, and limiting patient choice. Congress can address these barriers by advancing bipartisan legislation that improves access to care and recognizes APRNs' education and clinical expertise without altering state scope-of-practice laws.

The bipartisan *Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act* (H.R. 3170/S. 3296) would modernize the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) by allowing NPs to certify disabilities and oversee treatment for injured federal workers, consistent with state law. Although federal employees may select NPs as their providers under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, FECA requires physician certification and oversight to qualify for workers' compensation benefits, even when an NP already manages their care. This restriction can delay treatment, increase administrative burdens, and force patients to travel significant distances to see a physician. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that the legislation would have a negligible impact on federal spending (H.R. 3170 Score; S.3296 Score). H.R. 3170 received unanimous approval from the House Committee on Education and Workforce in June 2025, while S. 3296 was approved by voice vote by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in August 2026. Both measures await consideration by their respective chambers.

Similarly, the bipartisan *Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act* (H.R. 1616/S. 1805) would allow NPs to certify Medicare beneficiaries' need for therapeutic footwear without requiring additional physician certification. Current Medicare requirements can force patients already receiving

diabetes care from an NP to seek a separate physician certification, delaying access to medically necessary footwear and increasing costs and administrative burdens. The legislation would eliminate this duplicative requirement, better recognize the role of NPs in managing chronic conditions, and improve patient access to care. The proposal is also included in the broader *Improving Care and Access to Nurses (ICAN) Act* (H.R. 1317/S. 575), which addresses additional Medicare and Medicaid barriers to APRN care. H.R. 1616 received consideration during a September 2026 legislative hearing before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health. ANA urges congressional leadership to include the diabetic shoes measure in a year-end legislative package this year.

**Improving Timely Access to Care for Medicare Beneficiaries**

Prior authorization requirements under Medicare Advantage (MA) have become a significant obstacle to timely patient care, often delaying medically necessary treatments and placing unnecessary administrative burdens on health care providers. While intended to ensure appropriate utilization of health care services, these requirements can result in patients experiencing prolonged delays, disruptions in treatment, or outright denials of covered services. A 2022 report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General found that 13% of prior authorization requests denied by MA plans met Medicare coverage requirements, raising concerns about the need for greater transparency and oversight. With more than 35 million Americans enrolled in Medicare Advantage, addressing these challenges is increasingly important to protecting patient access to care.

The *Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act* (H.R. 3514/S. 1816) would reform the prior authorization process under Medicare Advantage by establishing an electronic prior authorization system, increasing transparency around coverage decisions, and strengthening oversight of health plans. These reforms would help reduce administrative burdens on clinicians, streamline the approval process, and ensure Medicare beneficiaries receive timely access to medically necessary care. The CBO issued a preliminary zero-cost estimate for the measure in October 2024. The bill also received unanimous bipartisan approval from the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee in July 2026. With more than 300 House cosponsors and 70 Senate cosponsors, the legislation has substantial bipartisan support. ANA urges congressional leadership to include the measure in a year-end legislative package before the conclusion of the 119th Congress.

**About ANA**

ANA is the premier organization representing the interests of the nation's 5 million registered nurses (RNs) through its constituent and state nurses' associations, organizational affiliates, and individual members. RNs serve in multiple direct care, care coordination, and administrative leadership roles, across the full spectrum of health care settings. RNs provide and coordinate patient care, educate patients and the public about various health conditions, and provide advice and emotional support to patients and their family members. ANA members also include those practicing in the four advanced registered nurse (APRN) roles: nurse practitioners (NPs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs). ANA and its nurses are dedicated to improving practices, policies, delivery models, outcomes, and access across the health care continuum. Our nurses care also deeply

about their patients because they understand that access to coverage and trusted providers is essential for delivering safe, compassionate, whole-person care.

Thank you for your consideration of these priorities in the lame duck session, and ANA looks forward to continuing to collaborate with you and serve as a resource. Please contact Tim Nanof, ANA's Executive Vice President for Policy and Government Affairs, at Tim.Nanof@ana.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN
ANA President

cc: Senate Republican & Democratic Leadership
House Republican & Democratic Leadership
Senate Appropriations Committee LHHS Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee LHHS Subcommittee
Senate Finance Committee
Senate HELP Committee
Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee
House Ways & Means Committee
House Energy & Commerce Committee
House Education & Workforce Committee
Congressional Nursing Caucus
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