

34th National Black Nurses Day on Capitol Hill

Theme: Health Equity, Nursing Resilience & Innovations: NBNA's New Call to Action

Nursing Workforce Issues

The National Black Nurses Association supports comprehensive efforts to increase the diversity of the nation's nursing workforce, promote nursing innovation, and changes that will address the nursing shortage. The nation is becoming increasingly more diverse, yet the nursing workforce does not reflect this changing demographic. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the need to implement innovative strategies to build and sustain a robust nursing workforce. Having a diverse nursing workforce that has adequate resources to provide quality patient care is essential in achieving health equity, decreasing health disparities, and eliminating racism that affects healthcare.

Background

- Numbering over 4 million, nurses are the largest and most trusted segment of the healthcare workforce. Increasing the professions overall cultural competence and diversification will lead to improved patient health outcomes.¹
- White nurses constitute over 80% of the current nursing workforce.
- Only 10% of the current nursing workforce are men and increasing the gender diversity of the profession is needed.
- Turnover rates for nurses are highest among those new to the profession with one-third of new nurses intending to leave practice within their first three months, 18% to 30% during their first year, and 37% - 57% after a second year.²
- COVID-19 has exasperated staff turnover due to increased patient acuity, lack of institutional support, staff shortages, inadequate resources, and conflicting COVID testing and quarantine policies, which have all lead to low job satisfaction.²
- Poor working conditions have been linked to health care acquired infections, nurse absenteeism, and the inability to provide safe and adequate patient care resulting in burnout and decreased job performance.^{4,5}
- Decades of research report on how safe nurse staffing practices/ratios reduce patient mortality, re-admission rates, recovery-time, and medication errors.⁶
- According to the World Health Organization, the nursing brain drain has resulted in an unequal distribution of nurses and midwives around the world, which weakens neglected health systems and ultimately affects the quality of care provided to patients.^{6,7}
- Two-thirds of the 741 nursing schools responding to an American Association of Colleges of Nursing survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into baccalaureate programs.⁸
- The overall nursing faculty vacancy rate reported in 2020 was 6.5%.⁹

Recommendations to Legislators. NBNA calls on the 117th Congress to:

1. Provide increased funding for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act. This bill expands and reauthorizes through FY2024 specified nursing workforce development programs.
2. NBNA recommends that HRSA develop innovative programs to improve nursing pipeline such as the NBNA Mini Nurse Academy. The academy focuses on traditionally underrepresented students in grades 3 – 6 to increase their awareness of nursing as a career option.
3. Support legislation to provide funding to pipeline nursing programs targeting minorities in line with the 2020-2030 Future of Nursing report and Campaign for Action.
4. Provide funding and research by World Health Organization, International Council of Nurses, and the National Academy of Science to develop interventions to address the nursing brain drain.
5. Support legislation that provides resources to study minimum nurse-to-patient staffing ratios for acute-care hospitals, with additional staff requirements based on individual patient acuity.

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“Health Equity, Nursing Resilience & Innovations: NBNA’s New Call to Action”

National Black Nurses Association Mini Nurse Academy

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) supports comprehensive efforts to increase the diversity of the nation's nursing workforce. The nation is becoming increasingly more diverse, yet the nursing workforce does not reflect this changing demographic. Consistent with 2020-2030 Future of Nursing report and Campaign for Action goals, NBNA is increasing its efforts to promote a more diverse nursing workforce through its Mini Nurse Academies.

Background

The disparities in health care and health outcomes between majority, racial/ethnic minority and underrepresented populations are well documented.¹ Increasing the overall cultural competence of the profession through racial/ethnic diversification will lead to improved patient health outcomes. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 12% of registered nurses are men,² and increasing the gender diversity of the profession is also needed. To eliminate the racial/ethnic and gender gaps in the nursing workforce, NBNA is employing an innovative strategy that addresses these disparities.

NBNA received \$248,000 from the Fund for Health Equity (Direct Relief) for its work to increase diversity in the nursing workforce by the creation of the NBNA Mini Nurse Academy, a pre-nursing program that targets elementary school-age students from traditionally underrepresented groups. The NBNA Mini Nurse Academy is an early experiential nursing program that targets 3rd- 6th-grade students from traditionally underrepresented groups. Students in 3rd – 6th grades in school districts where there are large communities of color are introduced to the nursing profession by professional nurses who share the students’ backgrounds and lived experiences.

The purpose of the program is to increase awareness of nursing as a career option and to provide the knowledge and skills related to professional nursing practice and health disparities. NBNA Mini Nurse Academy’s values are excellence, inclusion, diversity, equity, caring, empathy, respect, integrity, justice, service, accountability, and life-long learning. Consistent with these values NBNA aims to transform the nursing workforce by educating and inspiring youth from diverse populations to become nurses; to take courageous actions; and to improve health outcomes for all people. No other profession comes in contact with patients more than nurses. Hence, nurses have a special social contract and moral obligation to care for everyone in our society.

"We are pleased to bolster the indispensable work of these grassroots organizations striving to reduce disparities and increase equity among vulnerable populations," said Dr. Byron Scott, MD, MBA, Co-Chair of the Fund for Health Equity and Board Director of Direct Relief and Chair of its Medical Advisory Council. "With their deep ties and particular insights into the people and communities they serve, these groups are best suited and most acutely aware of what can make a difference – and it’s a privilege to be able to enable them to do more of it with philanthropic funding that is often difficult to secure within their local communities."

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