



National Black Nurses Association, Inc.
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For Immediate Release

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May 1, 2026

National Black Nurses Association Condemns Exclusion of Nursing From Federal Professional Degree Loan Protections

SILVER SPRING, MD. – The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) stands in firm opposition to the Department of Education’s decision to exclude nursing from the classification of “professional degree” programs under the newly finalized federal graduate loan borrowing limits. This ruling strikes at the heart of health equity and disproportionately burdens Black nurses and other nurses from historically underserved communities who have long relied on federal loan access to finance advanced nursing education.

Black communities remain among the most medically underserved populations in this nation. Advanced practice nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and nurse anesthetists serve as lifelines in these communities, as well as in rural areas across the country where access to physicians and specialists is scarce or nonexistent. Restricting the financial pathway to advanced nursing degrees does not happen in a vacuum. It compounds existing historic structural inequities and threatens to widen the already alarming gaps in healthcare access for those who need it most.

“The Department of Education’s ruling is not simply a policy matter; it is a direct threat to the pipeline of Black nursing professionals who are answering the call to serve communities that have been left behind. When we make it harder to access advanced degrees, we make it harder to deliver equitable care. The NBNA will not stand silent while barriers are erected against the very nurses who are sustaining our most vulnerable communities. This final rule threatens health equity, undermines the Black nursing workforce, and endangers historically underserved Black and other marginalized communities,” said Dr. Sheldon D. Fields, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, AACRN, FNAP, FAANP, FADLN, FAAN, President, National Black Nurses Association, Inc.

This decision arrives at a moment when the voices of nurses and their advocates are being systematically ignored, from public comment periods to legislative advocacy. The NBNA is deeply troubled that this action coincides with broader efforts to erode the protections that give marginalized communities a seat at the table, including ongoing threats to voting rights legislation that ensure the communities most affected by these policies have the power to hold their elected officials accountable.

From a health policy perspective, the implications of this ruling extend far beyond individual financial hardship. The advanced degrees now placed out of financial reach, the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP), and Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (PhD), are the very credentials that produce the educators, researchers, and clinicians capable of transforming health outcomes in underserved communities.

“As a nurse educator and mentor, I have witnessed firsthand the sacrifices Black nurses make to pursue advanced education. We must reverse this course before an entire generation of potential nurse leaders is priced out of the profession,” said Dr. Vivienne Pierce McDaniel, DNP, MSN, RN, FADLN, FNAP, Health Policy Chair, National Black Nurses Association, Inc.

The NBNA calls upon President Trump, Congress, and the Department of Education to reverse this ruling immediately and restore nursing to its rightful standing as a professional discipline deserving of full federal financial



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support. Nursing is not a second-tier profession. It is the backbone of American healthcare, and Black nurses are central to its strength, its conscience, and its future.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL BLACK NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC.

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA), founded in 1971, represents the voices of over 308,000 Black nurses from the United States, Eastern Caribbean, and Africa. The NBNA serves as a cutting-edge force for social change and is committed to providing a forum for collective action to ensure access to the highest quality of healthcare.

For more information, visit www.nbna.org