

June 9, 2008

Dear Colleagues:

The Illinois Association of Colleges of Nursing (IACN) supports the Action Report to American Nurses Association 2008 House of Delegates titled "Educational Advancement for Registered Nurses that recommends increasing the level of education required for continued licensure as a Registered Nurse (RN). IACN supports the initiative that would allow nurses to enter the profession at existing entry points but would require completion of a baccalaureate nursing (BSN) degree within 10 years of licensure. This initiative would address the critical need for RNs and the growing complexity of healthcare in the state of Illinois and the country. When promoting and facilitating continued education of all nurses, current licensed RNs and nursing students would be exempt from this requirement through grandfathering. The health care workforce shortage of the RN is well documented. From a national perspective, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) is concerned about the shortage of RNs and is working with schools, policy makers, kindred organizations, and the media to bring attention to this health care crisis. This initiative to advance the professional education of RNs recognizes the nursing shortage, the need to address the rapidly increasing complexity of health care and the critical need for more nurse faculty to educate future nurses.

The Illinois Department of Employment Statistics report an annual percentage growth rate in the number of RNs needed from 2004-2014 to be 19.29%, which indicates 4,024 additional nurses will be needed per year in Illinois. The (Illinois) Governor's Economic Development Subcabinet working with Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC), predicts that there will be an annual need for nurses in the Northeast Economic Development Region (NE-EDR) of 3,500. This represents a 2.6% growth rate in the number of RNs and a 4.0% replacement rate.

In addition to expressing a need for more RNs many employers, including the US military require or prefer those prepared at the BSN level as evidenced by hiring decisions and tuition reimbursement practices. The recommendation for BSN prepared by RNs is embedded in research cited in the ANA Action Report that identifies improved patient outcomes with more BSN prepared RNs. The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) considers the RN staffing mix and the number of nurses prepared at the BSN level when awarding Magnet State hospitals (<http://www.nursecredentialing.org/magnet/>)

Having reviewed the ANA Action Report titled, "Educational Advancement for Registered Nurses", we the members of IACN acknowledge the work of the originators, their recommendations, and the richness of the data and information provided in the report. The resolve positions current and future nurses for a win-win scenario. Considering the strides that have been made in providing access to baccalaureate degree completion programs, the barriers that have come down, and the resources available to the returning RN student, the time frame of ten years seems very doable and generous. As such, the IACN would like to go on record in support of this report and its implications.

Most Sincerely,

Maria A. Connolly, Chairperson &
IACN Member Schools