

New Jersey Nursing Initiative

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



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\$22 Million Initiative Aims to Reverse New Jersey's Nurse Faculty Shortage, Avert Health Care Crisis

Innovative Public/Private Partnership Launches at State Legislative Hearing

Trenton, NJ – To avert a severe nursing shortage that could cause grave harm to patient care in the state, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation today announced a major new initiative designed to ensure that New Jersey will have the nursing workforce it needs to meet its future health care demands. Launched at a hearing before the state Senate's Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee, the \$22 million, five-year "New Jersey Nursing Initiative" will increase the number of nurse faculty in the state, so there will be enough faculty to educate the next generation of nurses. Its central component is a Faculty Preparation Program that includes grants to schools of nursing around the state, and support for 46 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Jersey Nursing Scholars who study to become faculty and commit to teach in the state for three years after they complete their studies.

"There is a real danger that the short-term easing of the nursing shortage caused by the recession will create the false impression that we've found a solution to the more serious nursing shortage that lies ahead," warned Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "We have not. Layoffs and older nurses staying in or returning to the workforce postpone, but do not fix, the problem. Unless we act now, New Jersey and the rest of this nation are heading for a nursing catastrophe that will affect us all. We ignore it at our peril. The quality of health care for patients will suffer if we don't address it."

A report from the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing at Rutgers, released at the hearing, finds that the "average" registered nurse in New Jersey is a 50-year-old woman who works more than ten hours a day. More than half of the state's RNs (54.4 percent) are between the ages of 46 and 60. This means that nearly a third of the state's nursing workforce will reach retirement age in the next decade.

"Unfortunately, we are moving in the wrong direction when it comes to our nation's supply of nurses," added Joan Verplanck, president, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. "Already, the

annual cost to U.S. businesses of poor health care quality per covered employee is \$1,900. Each year, inadequate care costs businesses as many as 45 million avoidable sick days—the equivalent of 180,000 full time employees calling in sick every day for a full year. This costs the nation’s employers more than \$7 billion a year in lost productivity. That staggering price tag will increase as nurses become scarcer and the quality of care deteriorates as a result. That will translate into lower productivity and higher absenteeism in the workplace.”

“We are turning away qualified nursing applicants—young people who want to do this work, have the intelligence and talent for this work, and can make a difference through nursing,” said David Anthony Forrester, Ph.D., R.N., ANEF, associate dean and professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. “We’re turning them away because we have limited faculty to teach them. That’s a terrible shame, especially given the expected growth in demand for health care.”

The New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing also reports that there are 567 full-time nurse faculty working in the state. Their average age is 55, and 74 of them are expected to retire within five years. More than half the state’s nursing schools already limit student capacity due to limited faculty lines. For doctorally prepared faculty in particular, it can be challenging for schools to find qualified faculty applicants.

“Unless we take action, it will get worse,” said Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, RN, PNP-BC, program director for the ‘New Jersey Nursing Initiative’ and dean of the School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science at The College of New Jersey. “We need to attract younger nurses to faculty roles, and that’s what the ‘New Jersey Nursing Initiative’ will do. Younger nurse faculty will teach longer, and will prepare many more of the nurses our state and our country need.”

There are four major components to the “New Jersey Nursing Initiative.” In addition to supporting the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Jersey Nursing Scholars with full tuition and fees, a \$50,000 per year stipend and a laptop computer, the Faculty Preparation Program is working to develop, implement and evaluate new curricula for students at the masters and doctoral levels. The curricula is likely to become a model for the country.

The Faculty Preparation Program has awarded five grants totaling \$13.5 million to New Jersey masters and doctoral level nursing programs. Grants of \$3 million were awarded to the PhD in Nursing Programs at both Seton Hall University and Rutgers University. The MSN in Nursing Programs at two collaboratives—one comprised of William Paterson University, Richard Stockton College, Kean University, and The College of New Jersey; and the other of Fairleigh Dickinson, Monmouth University and Bloomfield College—each received \$2.5 million, as did the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

The second “New Jersey Nursing Initiative” component is strategic working groups that are working to: create innovative approaches to increase faculty capacity; make New Jersey nurse faculty a preferred career; lead focused policy initiatives; increase sustainable funding; build local, regional and statewide collaboration; and develop creative strategies to increase nurse education capacity.

Third, to help students interested in pursuing nursing find programs with seats available, in 2010 the “New Jersey Nursing Initiative” will begin developing and piloting a centralized online application service that will allow prospective students to complete a single application and send it to schools of nursing across the state. This is part of a national initiative, being spearheaded by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and New Jersey is one of its lead states.

Fourth, the “New Jersey Nursing Initiative” has a comprehensive website, www.njni.org—a valuable resource for anyone interested in nursing in New Jersey. It features essential state nursing data, news, emerging issues, and more, with information that is not available anywhere else, including searchable listings of nursing programs filtered by degree, county and institution.

Speakers at the hearing warned that New Jersey is heading for a serious—and avoidable—shortage of registered nurses that will jeopardize health care for all residents, from children with health problems, to women with high-risk pregnancies, to people in middle age who are beginning to develop preventable diseases, to seniors with multiple chronic conditions or who need palliative, end-of-life care. The “New Jersey Nursing Initiative” will work to ensure that the state will have the nurses it needs to meet the health care demands of all its residents.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years we’ve brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, we expect to make a difference in your lifetime.

The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce is a business advocacy organization based in Trenton. Created in 1911, the State Chamber staff represents its members on a wide range of business and education issues at the State House and in Washington. The organization also links the state’s local and regional chambers on issues of importance through its grassroots legislative network.