The members of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) are pleased to submit this statement for the record in support of the health professions education programs authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act.

HPNEC is an informal alliance of over 40 organizations representing a variety of schools, programs, and individuals dedicated to ensuring that Title VII and VIII programs continue to help educate the nation’s health care and public health personnel. HPNEC members are thankful for the support the Subcommittee has provided to the programs, which are essential to building a well-educated, diverse health care workforce.

The health professions and nursing education programs provide support to students, programs, departments, and institutions to improve the racial and ethnic diversity, accessibility, and quality of the health care workforce. These programs are designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Meet the nation's needs to increase the supply of primary medical and dental care providers, mental and behavioral health professionals, public health and allied health professionals, and nurses;

- Educate and train more health professionals in fields experiencing shortages, such as the current shortages in nursing, pharmacy, pediatric dentistry, mental and behavioral health professionals, public health, and allied health, such as radiology and clinical laboratory;

- Improve the geographic distribution of health professionals;

- Increase access to health care for underserved populations; and

- Enhance minority representation in the practicing health professional workforce.

In particular, the providers trained through these programs help meet the health care delivery needs of the over 3,800 Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in this country, at times serving as the only source of health care in many rural and disadvantaged communities. These programs provide an essential and stable infrastructure for the training and education of health professionals, with a needed emphasis on primary care and preventive medicine across the life span, from pediatrics to geriatrics.

A November 2001 report by the Advisory Committee on Training in Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry emphasizes the essential role of the Title VII programs in enhancing the quality and quantity of the primary care health workforce. The report
quotes a study in the Journal of Rural Health: “In 1997, Title VII funded programs increased the rates of graduates entering health profession shortage areas (HPSAs), resulting in 1357 providers...Doubling the funding of these programs...could decrease the time for HPSAs elimination to as little as six years.” The Advisory Committee recommends increased budget authority for Title VII, as it supports, “innovative approaches aimed at improving quality of care and basic access to care, and has been used to great effect by programs to leverage other sources of funding.” The federal investment in the health professions programs is valuable, because it fosters state-federal partnerships to enhance the nation’s health care system.

The Institute of Medicine report released March 20, 2002, “Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care,” targets the severe health care gap between racial and ethnic groups in the United States and focuses on strategies for eliminating health care disparities in the system. It calls for increased representation of racial and ethnic diversity in the health professions, as “racial and ethnic minorities are more likely than their non-minority colleagues to serve in minority and medically underserved communities.” Title VII and VIII programs, such as Centers of Excellence, Health Careers Opportunities Programs, Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students, and the Nurse Workforce Diversity programs, are designed to meet this need by bringing more underrepresented minorities into the health workforce.

Considering the life-altering and dramatic events in the country last year, an appropriate supply and distribution of health professionals has never been more essential to the public's health. During their 40-year existence, the Title VII and VIII programs have created a network of initiatives across the country that supports the training of many disciplines of health providers. These are the only federal programs designed to create infrastructures at our schools and in our communities that facilitate customized training designed to bring the latest emerging national priorities to the populations at large and meet the health care needs of special, underserved populations.

**HPNEC members recommend that the Title VII and VIII programs receive an appropriation of at least $550 million for FY 2002.** This recommendation is the second stage of a two-year effort to increase funding by 50 percent, which HPNEC members have determined to be needed by the programs to fulfill the aforementioned missions.

HPNEC members urge the subcommittee to consider the vital need for these health professions education programs as demonstrated by the passage of the Health Professions Education Partnerships Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-392), which reauthorized these programs. The reauthorization provided additional flexibility in the administration of these programs and consolidated them into seven general categories: Minority and Disadvantaged Health Professions Training; Primary Care Training; Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Linkages; Health Professions Workforce and Analysis; Public Health Workforce Development; Nursing Workforce Development; and Student Financial Assistance.

- The purpose of the **Minority and Disadvantaged Health Professionals Training** programs is to improve health care access in underserved areas and the representation of minority and disadvantaged health care providers in the health professions. **Minority Centers of Excellence** support programs that seek to increase the number of minority health professionals through increased research on minority health issues, establishment of an educational pipeline, and the provision of clinical opportunities in community-based health facilities. The **Health Career Opportunity Program** seeks to improve the development of a competitive applicant
pool through partnerships with local educational and community organizations. The Faculty Loan Repayment and Faculty Fellowship programs provide incentives for schools to recruit underrepresented minority faculty. The Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) make funds available to eligible students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are enrolled as full-time health professions students. Nursing students receive 16 percent of the funds appropriated for SDS.

- The Primary Care Training category, including General Pediatrics, General Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, General Dentistry, Pediatric Dentistry, and Physician Assistants, provides for the education and training of primary care physicians, dentists, and physician assistants to improve access and quality of health care in underserved areas. As noted in the November 2001 Advisory Committee report, two-thirds of all Americans interact with a primary care provider every year, and approximately one half of primary care providers trained through these programs go on to work in underserved areas, compared to 10 percent of those not trained through these programs. The General Pediatrics and General Internal Medicine programs provide critical funding for primary care training in community-based settings and have been successful in directing more primary care physicians to work in underserved areas. They support a range of initiatives, including medical student training, residency training, faculty development and the development of academic administrative units. Title VII is the only federal program that provides funding for family medicine residency training, academic departments, predoctoral programs, and faculty development. The General Dentistry and Pediatric Dentistry programs provide grants to dental schools and hospitals to create or expand primary care dental residency training programs. Recognizing that all primary care is not only provided by physicians, the primary care cluster also provides grants for physician assistant programs to encourage and prepare students for primary care practice in rural and urban Health Professional Shortage Areas. Additionally, these programs enhance the efforts of osteopathic medical schools to continue to emphasize primary care medicine, health promotion, and disease prevention, and the practice of ambulatory medicine in community-based settings.

- Because much of the nation’s health care is delivered in areas far removed from health professions schools, the Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Linkages cluster provides support for community-based training of various health professionals. These programs are designed to provide greater flexibility in training and encourage collaboration between two or more disciplines. These training programs also serve to encourage health professionals to return to such settings after completing their training. The Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) provide clinical training opportunities to health professions and nursing students in rural and other underserved communities by extending the resources of academic health centers to these areas. AHECs, which have substantial state and local matching funds, form networks of health-related institutions to provide education services to students, faculty and practitioners. Health Education and Training Centers (HETCs) were created to improve the supply of health professionals along the U.S.-Mexico border. They incorporate a strong emphasis on wellness through public health education activities for disadvantaged
populations. Given America's burgeoning aging population, there is a need for specialized training in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease and other health concerns of the elderly. *Geriatric Health Professions* programs support geriatric faculty fellowships, the Geriatric Academic Career Award, and Geriatric Education Centers, which are all designed to bolster the number and quality of health care providers caring for our older generations. The *Quentin N. Burdick Program for Rural Health Interdisciplinary Training* places an emphasis on long-term collaboration between academic institutions, rural health care agencies and providers to improve the recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural areas. The *Allied Health Training* programs help health profession schools, state and local governments and other entities to establish or expand allied health training programs. Secretary Thompson, on a number of occasions, has expressed alarm and concern about the shortage in clinical and public health laboratory specialists, particularly given the past and anticipated bioterrorism events. In fact, studies have shown that at least 9,300 new laboratory lab practitioners are needed every year, but only 4,900 are being produced. This funding enables schools to train more needed allied health disciplines.

• The **Health Professions Workforce and Analysis** program provides grants to institutions to collect and analyze data on the health professions workforce to advise future decision-making on the direction of health professions and nursing programs. The Health Professions Research and Health Professions Data programs have developed a number of valuable studies on the distribution and training of health professionals, including the Seventh National Sample Nursing Survey, finalized in February 2002.

• The **Public Health Workforce Development** programs are designed to increase the number of individuals trained in public health, to identify the causes of health problems, and respond to such issues as managed care, new disease strains, food supply, and bioterrorism. The *Public Health Traineeships and Public Health Training Centers* seek to alleviate the critical shortage of public health professionals by providing up-to-date training for current and future public health workers, particularly in underserved areas. *Preventive Medicine Residencies* are traditionally underfunded through Medicare GME, and this program seek to provide training to the only medical specialty that provides extensive training in both clinical medicine and community health to improve the country’s prevention efforts. *Dental Public Health Residency* programs are vital to the nation’s dental public health infrastructure. The *Health Administration Traineeships and Special Projects* grants are the only federal funding provided to train the managers of our health care system, with a special emphasis on those who serve in underserved areas.

• The **Nursing Workforce Development** programs provide training for basic and advanced degree nurses to improve the access to, and quality of, health care in underserved areas. Health care entities across the nation are experiencing a crisis in nurse staffing, caused in part by an aging workforce and lack of young people entering the profession. At the same time, the need for nursing services is expected to continue to increase over the next 20 years. The *Advanced Nurse Education* program awards grants to train a variety of advanced
practice nurses, including nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, nurse anesthetists, public health nurses, and nurse administrators. *Workforce Diversity* grants support opportunities for nursing education for disadvantaged students through scholarships, stipends, and retention activities. *Basic Nurse Education and Practice* grants are awarded to schools of nursing to strengthen basic nurse education and practice through program and student support. The *Nurse Education Loan Repayment Program* repays up to 85 percent of nursing student loans in return for at least two years of practice in a designated nursing shortage area. The Title VIII nursing programs also support the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, which is charged with advising the Secretary of Health and Human Services and Congress on nursing workforce, education, and practice improvement issues.

- The loan programs in the **Student Financial Assistance** assist needy and disadvantaged medical and nursing school students in covering the costs of their education. The **Nursing Student Loan** (NSL) program provides loans to undergraduate and graduate nursing students with a preference for those with the greatest financial need. The **Primary Care Loan** (PCL) program provides loans covering the cost of attendance in return for dedicated service in primary care. The **Health Professional Student Loan** (HPSL) program provides loans covering the cost of attendance for financially needy health professions students based on institutional determination. The NSL, PCL, and HPSL programs are funded out of each institution’s revolving fund and do not receive federal appropriations. The **Loans for Disadvantaged Students** (LDS) program provides grants to health professions institutions to make loans to health professions students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

HPNEC members respectfully urge support for funding of at least **$550 million** for the Title VII and VIII programs, an investment essential not only to the development and training of tomorrow’s health care professions but also to our nation’s efforts to provide needed health care services to underserved and minority communities. We appreciate the support of the Subcommittee and look forward to working with members of Congress to achieve these goals in FY 2003 and into the future.
The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC)

Administrators of Internal Medicine
Ambulatory Pediatric Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges Pharmacy
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Clinical Laboratory Science
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Departments of Family Medicine
Association of Family Practice Residency Directors
Association of Medical School Pediatric Chairs
Association of Minority Health Profession Schools
Association of Professors of Medicine
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions
Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of Subspecialty Professors
Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
California Area Health Education Center
Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine
National Area Health Education Center Organization
National Association of Geriatric Education Centers
North American Primary Care Research Group
Society for Pediatric Research
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine