



March 6, 2009

Dr. Mary Wakefield, Administrator
Department of Health and Human Services
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. Wakefield:

The Service Employees International Union and its Nurse Alliance of SEIU Healthcare congratulate you on your appointment as the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration. The 85,000 registered nurses and the 1 million caregivers of SEIU are especially pleased to have such a strong advocate for nursing and nurses leading the important mission of your agency. SEIU nurses and other healthcare workers serve in every clinical setting, with a majority of them delivering care to patients in safety net hospitals and public health agencies.

We are eager to meet with you and your staff to discuss several issues. The most "urgent" of the issues we would like to discuss with you and your staff relates to the \$500 million for workforce training appropriated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. In addition, we are very pleased to see an additional \$330 million proposed in President Obama's FY 2010 budget for health care workforce investments under your agency's purview.

As a longtime nurse leader and nurse educator, you are well aware of the persistent challenges facing nursing, and the consequences for our health care system and patients of the chronic shortages and staffing crises in our nation's hospitals. SEIU nurses feel very strongly that we will not solve the nursing crisis until nurses have a stronger voice in their workplace, and a stronger voice in shaping the health care reforms that our nation must urgently make.

Below are some recommendations we make as you begin to allocate the \$500 million from the ARRA:

1. We respectfully request that you devote as much of the total as possible to investing in the nurse workforce. SEIU supports investment in nurse faculty, but we also would like to see schools of nursing become more accountable to the needs of a 21st Century delivery system.
2. SEIU urges you to consider setting aside a significant portion of the nursing investment to devote to retention efforts, as authorized under Title II of the Nurse Reinvestment Act. Specifically, we would like to see a call for proposals that are focused on joint initiatives between hospitals and nurse labor organizations to improve and measure quality, advance training, reduce nurse turnover, and improve RN job satisfaction.
3. SEIU would also like to see greater attention to growing a more diverse nurse workforce and supporting non-traditional nursing students through grants, loans, scholarships, or other supports. While a BSN is a laudable goal, it is equally important that we offer other options and career ladders for practicing

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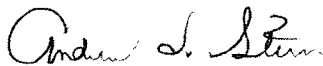
nurses to gain more education, and for LPNs and nurses aides to access a patient-care provider training system that is worker-centered and truly responsive to the needs of the industry and the experienced healthcare worker. SEIU has worked with many of our employer hospitals, nursing homes and public agencies to educate and train incumbent health care workers who have already demonstrated a strong commitment to health care and to direct patient care. We would like the opportunity to apply for funding under the Nurse Reinvestment Act to support these successful programs that not only have high graduation and retention rates, but also increase the diversity of the nurse workforce.

In addition, we would like to see the emphasis of the proposed \$330 million in additional health care workforce funding on similar initiatives.

We recognize what an enormous responsibility your agency has to “spend out” the investments in the ARRA, to promote the FY 2010 budget, and to prepare for health care reform legislation. SEIU nurses, organized under the Nurse Alliance of SEIU Healthcare, would like very much to have a “town hall” for nurses to hear your vision for nurses and nursing’s future in a reformed health care system, and for you to hear their perspective. We would like to work with your scheduler and explore the possibility of having such a “town hall” in April.

Once again, we are thrilled with your appointment and look forward to working with you and assisting you in any way. Please contact Jamie Cohen at 202.730.7434 or Jamie.cohen@seiu.org.

Sincerely,



Andrew L. Stern
International President



Dian Palmer
Chair of SEIU Nurse Alliance

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