

December 5, 2005

The Honorable  
United States  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations representing our nation's health professions write in opposition to the Administration's proposed rescissions to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration Student Loan Programs under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act.

Those affected include the Health Professions Student Loan Program, the Primary Care Loan Program, the Loans for Disadvantaged Students Program, and the Nursing Student Loan Program. These loan programs provide long-term, low interest loans for economically disadvantaged and underrepresented minority students to pursue a degree in the health professions. The funding comes from revolving funds created by Congress to address shortages in the health professions workforce and is sustained by student/graduate repayment and annually accruing interest. Currently, no federal funds are required to maintain these programs, thereby posing no burden on taxpayers.

The Administration's proposal recalls the "Federal portion of all of the liquid assets of such fund," requiring the return of all funds that have not yet been dedicated to students. Under this proposal, on June 30, 2006, the Secretary of HHS will determine the federal share of the revolving funds to be returned no later than September 30, 2006. Effectively eliminating all federal support, the rescissions would devastate the health profession student loan programs. Following June 30, the schools' revolving funds would consist only of funds acquired by recipient repayments. By essentially reducing the available capital to zero, these rescissions will deny participating institutions the ability to offer cost-effective loans to students dedicated to providing care in their chosen health profession.

While we understand the need to cut spending during the current fiscal environment, reclaiming the original federal contribution to these programs reneges on a national commitment to support a well-educated, well-distributed supply of health professionals who deliver care in our most needy communities. Eliminating these programs will not only neglect financially disadvantaged and minority students, but also threaten the stability of our nation's healthcare infrastructure. The undersigned organizations strongly urge you to exclude these rescissions from any further federal savings legislation.

Sincerely,

Ambulatory Pediatric Association  
American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine  
American Association of Nurse Practitioners  
American College of Physicians  
American Dental Education Association  
American Dental Hygienists' Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Medical Student Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Optometric Association  
American Optometric Student Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Psychological Association  
American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
American Society of Radiologic Technologists  
Association of Academic Health Centers  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry  
Association of University Programs in Health Administration  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses  
Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations  
Hispanic-Serving Health Professions Schools, Inc.  
HIV Medicine Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
National Association for Geriatric Education  
National Association of Geriatric Education Centers  
National Association of Medical Minority Educators, Inc.  
National League for Nursing  
Oncology Nursing Society  
Society for Adolescent Medicine  
Society for General Internal Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research