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