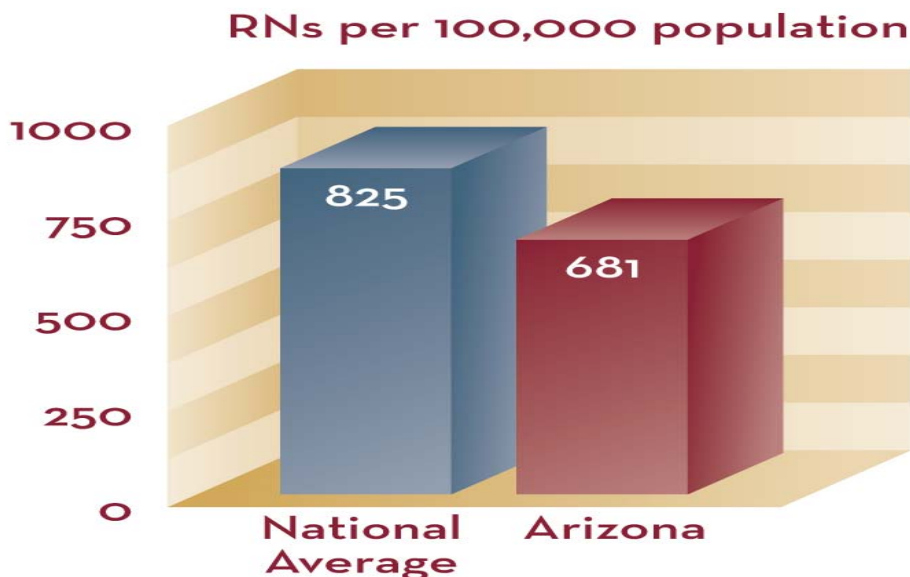




Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association

Rx for Arizona's Nursing Crisis: America's Partnership for Nursing Education

Attracting and retaining top talent is a cornerstone of Arizona's 21st century economy. However, our state faces a dire shortage of healthcare professionals, including nurses. With 681 nurses per 100,000 population, Arizona ranks 45th in the nation for the number of working registered nurses (RNs) per capita, and well below the national average nurse/patient ratio of 825/100,000 (*National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Service Administration, Bureau of Health Professions*).



According to the Arizona Healthcare Workforce Data center, sponsored by the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA), and the 2007 RN data analysis conducted by Arizona State University's Center for Health Information & Resources (CHIR), **Arizona will need 48,772 new nurses by 2017—or 5,419 new nurses per year—just to keep pace with population growth and reach the national average nurse/patient ratio.** CHIR calculated the number of new nurses needed based on a detailed analysis of RN survey data collected by the Arizona Board of Nursing. Alarming, the survey revealed that one-third of Arizona's nurses are age 55 or older.

Arizona hospitals are responding to the state's rapid population growth by expanding their bed capacity, prompting healthcare experts and policymakers alike to raise an obvious question: will there be enough nurses to staff new hospital beds?

The Capacity Crunch

Despite the ever-increasing demand for new nurses, the Arizona Board of Nursing reports that 2,223 qualified applicants to Arizona nursing education programs were turned away in 2006 because there were not enough faculty members to educate them. In 2007, this number jumped by an alarming 600 applicants to a total of 2,823 prospective nursing students who were placed on waiting lists due to a lack of faculty. **Lack of capacity in Arizona’s nursing education programs continues to be the driving force behind Arizona’s nursing shortage.** Indeed, representatives of Arizona nursing programs often cite a lack of capacity and qualified faculty as one of the primary reasons for turning away qualified applicants.



AzHHA deeply appreciates Congressman Pastor’s leadership in sponsoring H.R. 2794, America’s Partnership for Nursing Education Act of 2007, which will establish a national grant program to provide fast-growing states with severe nursing shortages—like Arizona—funds to add faculty at colleges and universities and increase the number of nurses graduating each year.

AzHHA is encouraged that Arizona colleges and universities graduated 2,243 students in 2007, an 18 percent increase from the 1,899 graduated in 2006. The recent increase in Arizona nursing graduates may be attributed to a number of factors, including strong partnerships hospitals and nursing programs have developed to address Arizona’s nursing shortage. Arizona hospitals have funded nursing faculty positions, founded joint hospital-college nursing education programs, and financed accelerated nursing degree programs with universities as well as colleges. In 2007, Arizona hospitals spent more than \$32 million to advance healthcare education and graduate more healthcare professionals. In 2006, an AzHHA survey revealed that 40 of the state’s hospitals invested more than \$25 million in an effort to graduate more healthcare professionals.

Recent state appropriations have also had a positive impact. In 2005, Governor Janet

Napolitano and the Arizona Legislature responded to Arizona's nursing crisis by establishing **Arizona's Partnership in Nursing Education (APNE)**, a five-year demonstration program designed to double nursing school enrollment in Arizona by 2010. With the governor's support, the Legislature appropriated \$4 million per year for APNE over five years (a total of \$20 million), funds that are now being used exclusively to pay for additional faculty at Arizona's colleges and universities.

Arizona's Hospitals Respond to Nursing Shortage; Population Growth

AzHHA and its members have worked to attract nurses and other allied healthcare professionals to Arizona through its Campaign for Caring and through The Healthcare Institute at the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association. And a recent AzHHA-sponsored survey revealed that hospitals are doing a better job of retaining nurses they currently employ and increasing their satisfaction. But even as Arizona hospitals improve in their ability to retain nurses, they are drawing from a limited pool of professionals.

Enact H.R. 2794, America's Partnership for Nursing Education Act of 2007

Ensuring that Arizona's nursing education programs are adequately equipped to train and graduate the number of nurses Arizona needs now and in the future will require a dedicated public/private partnership. Key players include Arizona's congressional delegation, the governor, legislators, the Arizona Board of Regents, universities, colleges, and Arizona's healthcare community.

Toward that end, AzHHA urges Arizona's congressional delegation to co-sponsor H.R. 2794, which establishes a national grant program intended to provide funds to high-growth states with severe nursing shortages that have already invested state dollars to expand the capacity of nursing education programs at universities and colleges. This legislation would build on the modest success already achieved at the state level and position Arizona to generate the 5,419 new nurses we need to keep up with our state's growing population.

Congress earlier embraced its responsibility to help solve the nation's nursing shortage with the passage of the Nurse Education Act and the Nurse Reinvestment Act, which provide funding for grants, scholarships, loan repayments and other vehicles designed to support the nursing profession. AzHHA applauds these efforts, and now calls on our congressional delegation to build upon them by helping states like Arizona that have rapidly growing populations and critical shortages of nurses that have already appropriated funds to expand nursing education program capacity. As a state where strong partnerships between the healthcare and educational communities already exist, Arizona is well positioned to serve as a site for this demonstration program. **Toward that end, AzHHA urges Arizona's congressional delegation to co-sponsor:**

- **H.R. 2794, which establishes America's Partnership in Nursing Education, a five-year grant program providing \$20 million in federal matching funds per year to high-growth states with severe nursing shortages that have**

appropriated state funds to expand enrollment capacity at universities and colleges.