

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 3, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

MEMORANDUM OF DISAPPROVAL

I have withheld my approval from H.R. 17085, a bill that would amend Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act to provide support for the training of nurses.

This measure would authorize excessive appropriations levels -- more than \$650 million over the three fiscal years covered by the bill. Such high Federal spending for nursing education would be intolerable at a time when even high priority activities are being pressed to justify their existence.

I believe nurses have played and will continue to play an invaluable role in the delivery of health services. The Federal taxpayer can and should selectively assist nursing schools to achieve educational reforms and innovations in support of that objective. The Administration's 1976 budget request will include funds for this purpose. Furthermore, I intend to urge the 94th Congress to enact comprehensive health personnel training legislation that will permit support of nurse training initiatives to meet the new problems of the 1970's.

This act inappropriately proposes large amounts of student and construction support for schools of nursing. Without any additional Federal stimulation, we expect that the number of active duty registered nurses will increase by over 50 percent during this decade.

Such an increase suggests that our incentives for expansion have been successful, and that continuation of the current Federal program is likely to be of less benefit to the Nation than using these scarce resources in other ways. One result of this expansion has been scattered but persistent reports of registered nurse unemployment, particularly among graduates of associate degree training programs.

Today's very different outlook is not reflected in this bill. We must concentrate Federal efforts on the shortage of certain nurse specialists, and persistent geographic maldistribution. However, this proposal would allocate less than one-third of its total authorization to these problems. Moreover, it fails to come to grips with the problem of geographic maldistribution.

Support for innovative projects -- involving the health professions, nursing, allied health, and public health -- should be contained in a single piece of legislation to assure that decisions made in one sector relate to decisions made in another, and to advance the concept of an integrated health service delivery team. By separating out nursing from other health personnel categories, this bill would perpetuate what has in the past been a fragmented approach.

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The enrolled bill would also extend various special nursing student assistance provisions of current law. Nursing students are overwhelmingly undergraduates, and as such should be -- and are -- entitled to the same types of student assistance available generally under the Office of Education's programs for post-secondary education. These include, in particular, guaranteed loans and basic educational opportunity grants for financially hard-pressed students. Categorical nursing student assistance activities are not appropriate and should be phased out, as the Administration has proposed.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
January 2, 1975.

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