



**American Hospital
Association®**

800 10th Street, NW
Two CityCenter, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001-4956
(202) 638-1100 Phone
www.aha.org

March 4, 2015

The Honorable Rob Portman
United States Senate
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our nearly 43,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to support S. 629, the “*Making the Education of Nurses Dependable for Schools Act (MEND)*.” This legislation is critical to ensuring the viability of our nation’s hospital-based nursing education programs and a robust supply of nurses to provide health care to patients.

Under current law, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires hospital-based nursing education programs to be part of a hospital in order to receive Medicare “pass-through” support payments. These payments help provide the additional infrastructure and faculty needed to educate nursing students. Recently, the largest accrediting body for higher education – the New Higher Learning Commission (HLC) – has updated and modernized their standards to require hospital-based programs to become separately incorporated to retain accreditation. CMS, however, has indicated that the agency lacks the authority to update its standards to be consistent with the accrediting body, therefore creating a conflict with HLC’s modernized standard. As a result, Medicare “pass-through” support payments to hospital-based nurse education programs are threatened.

Nearly 160 hospital-based nurse education programs currently receive \$270 million in CMS funding to support their schools and students. This support has been available to hospital-based programs for more than 20 years and helps produce nearly 5,000 nurses annually. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has indicated that by 2025, our nation will need at least 260,000 nurses to meet the health care needs of our citizens.

Your legislation, which is budget neutral, would help ensure the viability of hospital-based nursing programs and a steady supply of nurses by authorizing CMS to update their regulations to comport with HLC’s new and modernized requirements.

We look forward to working with you to help enact S. 629, the MEND Act.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

