Nursing Education
Recent data from the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies (TCNWS) within the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) confirms the worst-kept secret in nursing workforce research — there is, and will continue to be, a shortage of nurses in Texas. In fact, TCNWS estimates that supply of nurses will fall short of demand such that by 2030, the shortage will more than quadruple, and Texas will be 60,000 nurses short of what is needed to meet health care demands.¹

More than 50% of Texas baby boomers will be eligible for retirement by 2020. Nationwide, 40% of all RNs are 54 years old or older, and of those, 62% are planning to retire in the next 3 years.² In Texas, 41% of both RNs and APRNs were over the age of 50 in 2013. The aging of our population will create an increased demand for health care services at the same time we face a huge exodus of nurses from the workforce.

Texas cannot afford to relax its efforts to ensure an adequate nursing workforce. Schools of nursing have made considerable progress in addressing the existing demand; however, lack of clinical training capacity and faculty shortage issues pose significant challenges to meeting the projected demands of an aging population. To increase capacity, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board administers innovative grant awards, which enable schools of nursing to develop alternative approaches to clinical training.

Additionally, incentives are needed to attract and retain nursing faculty to train new students to become nurses. Nursing faculty shortages largely result from a pay scale that fails to compete with the private sector.

The Texas Nurses Association works closely with nurse educators, university and community college systems, and legislative and regulatory staff to identify concrete solutions to issues in nursing workforce supply and demand.

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2 Nationwide, 40% of all RNs are 54 years old or older, and of those, 62% are planning to retire in the next 3 years.
Nursing Shortage Reduction Program

Issue Background
The Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program (PNSRP) was passed into law in 2001 in response to a reemerging nursing workforce shortage in Texas. The law gives the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) the ability to provide dedicated funds to nursing education programs that demonstrate an ability to increase enrollment and graduates. The program has been funded every year since 2001, and currently 106 academic institutions utilize the program.

The current program consists of three “pots of funds” distributed by the THECB to nursing programs within public and private independent colleges and universities that are able to increase their nursing graduates.

1. Regular Program
   All nursing programs are eligible to participate. Pro-rata funds are distributed after the fact based on the number of increased graduates over the previous year.

2. Over 70 Program
   Only nursing programs with graduation rates of 70% or higher are eligible to participate. Funds are distributed each biennium in advance (at $10,000 per student), based on projected increases in prelicensure enrollments of 12% for the first year and an additional 18% for the second year. If the targets are not met, the school repays the pro-rata share of the money advanced.

3. Under 70 Program
   Eligible nursing programs are 1) programs with a graduation rate below 70% and 2) new programs that do not have a previous year graduation rate. Funds are distributed in advance based on the programs agreeing to increase prelicensure graduates by a specific number set by the program.

Why It Matters to Texas Nurses
The program has worked very well, increasing the annual number of pre-licensure nurse graduates (new nurses) from 4,500 in 2001 to 16,204 in 2015. Due to Texas’ ability to withstand the recession that began in 2008, the high number of people moving to Texas each day, and the looming retirement of baby boomers, nurses continue to be in high demand. In fact, a report from the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies this year reveals that the current nurse workforce shortage is expected to more than quadruple to 60,000 nurses short of demand by 2030 if nothing is done. It is more critical than ever that Texas maintain its PNSRP and keep it adequately funded to meet future demands.

TNA Position
In the 84th legislative session, the Legislature appropriated $33.75 million to the Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program. The Texas Nurses Association engaged the THECB, Texas university and community college systems, and nursing educators in extensive discussions regarding the PNSRP. All of these groups agree that the PNSRP should continue in its current form with the same appropriation to keep up with high demand for nurse graduates. TNA urges the Legislature to continue its commitment to Texas citizens by fully reinvesting in the PNSRP in the 85th legislative session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Established the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies within DSHS; $5.8 million appropriated for 2004-2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$14.7 million appropriated for 2008-2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$30 million appropriated for 2012-2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$33.75 million appropriated for 2016-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Established PNSRP with no appropriation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$6 million appropriated for 2006-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$47.2 million appropriated for 2010-2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$33.75 million appropriated for 2014-2015</td>
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Community College Baccalaureate Programs

Issue Background
Graduates of associate degree (ADN), diploma, or baccalaureate degree nursing (BSN) programs are eligible to sit for the same professional nursing licensure exam (NCLEX-RN), which is designed to measure basic competency as a registered nurse (RN). Despite the differences in preparatory educational levels, individuals from these various programs demonstrate similar pass rates on the NCLEX-RN.

Substantial research over the past 15 years has consistently demonstrated that nurses prepared at the BSN level achieve better patient outcomes than those initially prepared with an ADN or diploma. The evidence is so convincing that in 2010 in its landmark Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health report, the Institutes of Medicine recommended that 80% of RNs have a BSN by 2020. This is no small challenge — in 2007 only 45.6% of Texas RNs were BSN prepared. However, following the report, nurse educators launched a number of initiatives to facilitate the articulation of ADN and diploma graduates into BSN programs.

In 2011, the Consortium for Advancing Baccalaureate Education in Texas (CABNET) emerged to reduce duplication in BSN completion programs (RN-to-BSN) and ADN curricula. CABNET establishes agreements between community colleges and universities to enable seamless transition for students who first complete an ADN and continue on to complete their BSN. In 2012, Texas was awarded a $300,000 Academic Progression in Nursing grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to continue this work. The grant was renewed for an additional two years in 2014. Currently, 24 Texas community colleges have established agreements with 12 universities.
These cumulative efforts have successfully increased the number of RNs with a bachelor's degree from 45.6% to 55.4% in the last eight years.

Additionally, following the IOM’s challenge, a number of universities in Texas and other states have launched online BSN completion programs that accommodate the working nurse’s schedule and facilitate achievement of a BSN. There are no reports that BSN completion programs are at or near capacity.

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What It Means for Texas
In 2013, the Texas Legislature created a study to consider giving community colleges the authority to grant bachelor’s degrees in the fields of applied science and nursing. Consequently the RAND Corporation conducted a study and proposed several options in July 2014. Based on this report, the THECB recommended that if community colleges were to offer baccalaureate degrees, specific standards should be required, such as accreditation by a national nursing organization, to ensure quality in nursing education.

In 2015, the Texas Legislature considered a proposal to allow community colleges to expand their academic scope and provide either a full four-year baccalaureate degree program or an RN-to-BSN completion program. However, RN-to-BSN completion programs do not address the nursing shortage as they do not produce additional pre-licensure graduates. They only address the goal of increased educational preparation of RNs who are already in the workforce.

Additionally, there is no data in Texas that definitively shows that community colleges can take on the burdens — including funding, infrastructure, faculty employment levels, and clinical site access issues, all of which already impact universities — of providing bachelor’s degrees. Without this necessary data, there is no way to know that allowing baccalaureate programs in community colleges will positively impact the nursing workforce in Texas.

TNA Position
The Texas Nurses Association supports academic progression for all nurses, particularly RN to BSN programs. Further, TNA supports continued growth in the existing higher education strategies, which include participation in THECB incentive programs and articulation agreements between community colleges and universities that allow associate degree and diploma nursing students to seamlessly continue their baccalaureate education.

Until Texas has definitive data on the realistic ability of Texas community colleges to take on the financial and administrative burden that would come with four-year baccalaureate programs, the legislature should focus its resources on developing and championing the current proven pipeline between community colleges and universities through articulation agreements like CABNET.

Legislative History
HB 1384 (2015 – Left pending in Calendars)
• Would have authorized THECB to allow certain community colleges to offer bachelor’s degrees.

SB 414 (2013)
• Mandated a study to consider giving community colleges the authority to grant bachelor’s degrees in the fields of applied science and nursing.
**Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Program (NFLRP)**

**Issue Background**
Experienced, qualified faculty members for nursing schools are extremely difficult to find due to the vast differences in pay scales for nursing faculty versus clinical settings. A 2015 study found that the top reasons that nursing education programs are not hiring new faculty members are: “insufficient funds to hire new faculty” and “noncompetitive salaries.” The national vacancy rate for nursing faculty positions has been between 7-8% since 2010. In Texas, our nursing faculty vacancy rate has grown from 7.8% in 2011 to 10.9% in 2015, and our faculty turnover rates in Texas nursing programs are now at 21.1%.

The NFLRP was funded in 2013 in response to the continued lag in nursing workforce supply over the last decade and the need to provide an incentive to bring qualified instructors into higher education faculty.

The funding mechanism for the program is tied to the Physician Education Loan Repayment Program (PELRP), and is only funded if there are excess funds leftover in the physician program. The PELRP is currently appropriated with $33 million per biennium, with all excess funding above that appropriation going to the Comptroller's office in a General Revenue-Dedicated account.

**Why It Matters to Texas Nurses**
The NFLRP was originally intended to provide an incentive for practicing nurses to go into faculty positions and increase capacity for nursing school expansion, which would in turn work towards reducing the overall nursing shortage in Texas. However, without any guarantee of funds until all other PELRP hands have been fed at the end of the fiscal year, the THECB is not able to market the program to nurses or provide any kind of incentive for funds since there may be differing amounts from year to year, or simply none available.

**TNA Position**
The Texas Nurses Association recommends that the Legislature set aside a dedicated account to fund the NFLRP. Only with a dedicated funding source will the program be able to reliably incentivize nurses to become faculty and assist in the nursing shortage reduction efforts.

**Legislative History**

**HB 7 (2015)**
- General taxation bill — amended funding formula for PELRP to add Tax Code Sec. 155.2415(a)(3)(B) and 155.2415(b) to allow the proceeds to direct to the General Fund if the Comptroller determines that the PELRP appropriated amount ($33.8M) is sufficient to continue the program.

**SB 1258 (2013)**
- Provided funding mechanism for the NFLRP established in 2004. Provided loan repayment assistance for nurses if money is left over from PELRP at the end of the fiscal year.

**HB 4583 (2009)**
- Budget Consolidation bill — set up revenue for the Physician Education Loan Repayment Program so that a percentage of tax receipts from smokeless tobacco are dedicated to the property tax relief fund with the remainder going to the PELRP.