

CHARTIS TOP READS

National Nurses Week: Lawmakers aim to improve support as shortages projected to grow

Week of May 4 - May 10, 2025

| MAY 09, 2025

<https://www.chartis.com/insights/national-nurses-week-lawmakers-aim-improve-support-shortages-projected-grow>

The Buzz This Week

May 5–12 marks National Nurses Week 2025, which celebrates nurses and recognizes their contributions worldwide and the challenges they face every day. It's a timely recognition, particularly as Congress considers legislation to support the constrained nursing workforce—and potential funding cuts could exacerbate the insufficient pipeline.

Nurses comprise the largest cohort of the healthcare workforce. An estimated 4 million registered nurses (RN) make up more than 1 of every 5 healthcare workers. Because of their routine interactions with patients, nurses help to close health disparities and evolve healthcare systems. They are often the first to detect the signs of systemic issues affecting patient health and can intervene by providing culturally competent care and advocating for policy development to reduce disparities.

The RN workforce is expected to grow by more than 6% by 2032. The advanced practice registered nurse workforce (APRN) is expected to grow even faster, by an estimated 38% from 2022 to 2032. However, a 2022 survey from the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) indicates that if labor force patterns remain unchanged, the demand for RNs in 2036 will exceed supply by 9%, resulting in a shortage of more than 337,000 full-time RNs.

Nursing shortages have ebbed and flowed for decades as the economy evolved, nurses retired, or healthcare demands changed. During the pandemic, demand for RNs surged, and the shortages worsened. States and health systems have instituted initiatives to address these shortages.

Why It Matters

Research repeatedly has shown the serious implications of nursing shortages for overall patient safety and wellness. Higher nurse staffing levels are associated with fewer deaths, lower rates of infection, increased patient satisfaction, and shorter hospital stays. For instance, a 2020 study of patients with sepsis found that “each additional patient per nurse is associated with 12% higher odds of in-hospital mortality ... and 7% higher odds of 60-day readmission.” At some point, patient access also will suffer as understaffed units or clinics won’t be able to support patient demand.

Limited availability of nursing education is a growing contributor to the shortages. Nursing school enrollment is not growing fast enough, and nursing school faculty shortages are further restricting enrollment. According to an AACN report, 65,766 qualified applications (not applicants) were turned away from US baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in the 2023-2024 academic year due to insufficient faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, and clinical preceptors, as well as budget constraints.

Stress, burnout, and persistent short staffing continue to contribute to the workforce crisis. A 2025 state of nursing survey found 65% of nurses are experiencing stress and burnout, and only 60% would choose nursing as their career again.

The survey outlines five priorities for healthcare leaders to address: staffing and recruitment efforts, competitive pay and benefits, work-life balance initiatives, empathetic and transparent leadership, and removal of bureaucratic and administrative hurdles.

At the federal level, legislators in April 2025 introduced a bipartisan bill called the National Nursing Workforce Center Act of 2025, S. 1482, which would include a “2-year pilot program to establish new or enhance existing state-based nursing workforce centers, evaluate the impact of the centers on outcomes, and assess the feasibility of nursing workforce public-private partnerships.” Currently, more than 40 state nursing workforce initiatives commonly referred to as “centers” implement workforce programs, conduct localized research, and publish reports on topics such as best practices for workforce planning and development. The centers share a common goal of increasing the supply of nurses by identifying imbalances between supply and demand, enabling forecasting efforts that drive nursing workforce development and policy recommendations.

However, President Trump’s Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal released May 2 calls for a reduction of \$1.7 billion for HRSA programs, including a \$1 billion decrease for multiple health workforce programs. This could include the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs that address all aspects of nursing workforce demand, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention. The proposed budget also calls for a decrease of \$195 million for the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) programs, which have reduced barriers for individuals pursuing graduate-level degrees in nursing.

In an environment already struggling to provide robust support for nurses, proposed funding cuts would make supporting and growing the nursing workforce even more difficult.

RELATED LINKS

News Wise:

Physician's Weekly:

Chartis Top Reads

[View All](#)

Our services

[STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION](#)

[PERFORMANCE TRANSFORMATION](#)

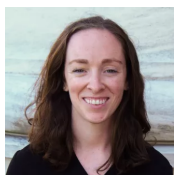
[DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION](#)

[CHARTIS CENTERS FOR AI & STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE](#)

[PAYER TRANSFORMATION](#)

[STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & CHANGE MANAGEMENT](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Meredith Deal

Senior Research Associate