Texas should provide flexibility to the Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Program (NFLRP) and fund it at a level sufficient enough to prepare and attract nurses to faculty roles.

- The $7,000 cap on the single year award amount should be removed; instead the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) should be given the authority to set the award maximum through rulemaking.
- The program should be made available to part-time as well as full-time faculty on a pro rata basis.

**FACULTY SHORTAGE**

Addressing the established nursing shortage remains difficult due to an ongoing faculty shortage. In the past decade, Texas nurse prelicensure programs turned away 30-47% of qualified applicants. In 2019 alone, this number totaled 13,694.¹ Schools continue to cite a lack of faculty, second only to insufficient clinical space, as the most common reason that qualified nursing student applicants were not accepted.

When Texas is already 27,786 registered nurses short, a deficit that is expected to more than double by 2032, we can not afford to qualified students denied enrollment to nursing school.¹ Experienced, qualified faculty members are difficult to attract due to insufficient funds and noncompetitive salaries.² Additionally, most nurses don’t enter academia until later in their career, which shortens their faculty lifespan.³ The national vacancy rate for nursing faculty positions has remained between 7-8% since 2010.

In Texas, the median nurse faculty age is 51 with 38.6% eligible to retire currently or within the next decade. Similar to national trends, nurse faculty vacancy rates have remained between 6-8% and turnover rates, 12-15%. The percentage of nursing faculty who are part-time has risen from 24.8% in 2010 to 41.3% in 2019 – a 66.1% increase.

**THE NEED FOR ACTION**

In order to become educators, nurses must earn a master’s degree or higher; generally, an educator must have one degree level higher than that of the courses they teach. However, the cost of returning to school to earn a
graduate degree can be prohibitive. The median amount of debt incurred to pursue graduate education in nursing is $40,000 to $54,999. The current NFLRP structure limiting funds to $7,000 for full-time faculty only may not be adequate to serve as an attractive incentive.

Texas must do better to help produce graduate-prepared nurses for faculty roles in order to meet nursing shortage demands. Sufficiently funding the NFLRP is critical. Removing the cap on annual awards and opening up the program to an increasing number of part-time faculty will provide the most impact on increasing faculty and opening up nursing education to more qualified applicants.

**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

**SB 358 (2019)**

Would have removed the $7,000 cap on the single year loan repayment award amount and enabled part-time faculty to access the program on a pro rata basis.

**SB 1 (2017)**

General Appropriations bill dedicated $3 million to the program.

**HB 7 (2015)**

General taxation bill, amended funding formula for Physician Education Loan Repayment Program (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.

The balance in General Revenue may be appropriated “only for health care purposes.”

**SB 1258 (2013)**

Provided funding mechanism for the Nursing Loan Repayment Program 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 PELRP 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.

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