



## **HEAL Coalition ALERT: Pending Legislation Proposes Up to \$10,000 in Scholarships for Students in Allied Health Training Programs**

Recognizing a looming crisis in shortages of qualified allied health professionals, Members of Congress have introduced proposals that promote, attract, and retain quality individuals to careers in allied health. In the House of Representatives, Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL) has introduced H.R. 215, the Allied Health Professions Reinvestment Act. The bill proposes several programs to increase awareness of and create incentives for the allied health professions:

- Scholarships of up to \$10,000 per year to individuals in allied health training programs, provided such individuals agree to provide one year of service as an allied health professional at an underserved health care facility for every year of scholarship funding provided.
- Grants to allied health schools to (among other things) promote development of degree-awarding programs in allied health; provide education in new technologies, including distance learning; provide career advancement, training, and mentoring; study issues of importance to the profession; and promote training and education regarding the needs of the elderly.
- A loan forgiveness program providing up to \$30,000 in loans annually to eligible individuals, with up to 85% of such loan forgiven if the individual serves as a faculty member at a school of allied health for four years.

Sadly, however, one of the bill's final sections states that the grants and programs described in the legislation shall only apply to institutions described in Section 101 of the Higher Education Act. In other words, proprietary schools need not apply.

In the Senate, Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and two colleagues have introduced S. 473, the Allied Health Reinvestment Act. Many of the provisions and programs are similar to the House bill offered by Rep. Stearns, including:

- Grants to allied health associations or programs to support outreach efforts to elementary and secondary schools; increase opportunities for disadvantaged students; provide remedial assistance to allied health students; and help finance child care and transportation costs for allied health students.
- Grants to allied health schools to promote programs that facilitate the entry of secondary school students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- A loan forgiveness program providing up to \$30,000 in loans annually to eligible individuals, with up to 85% of such loan forgiven if the individual serves as a faculty member at a school

of allied health for four years.

- Scholarships to individuals in allied health training programs who commit to provide at least two years of service in a rural or medically underserved area.

Because the Senate bill states that “allied health education program” shall refer to all institutions accredited by an agency recognized by the Department of Education that offer certificate or degree programs, proprietary schools will be eligible for grants and programs, where they would not be eligible under the House bill language.

If the proprietary allied health school community does not take action, this legislation could be enacted to the exclusion of your students and schools. Congress must be reminded of the quality education and training private career colleges and schools provide to a large and growing segment of the allied health professions workforce. And we must ensure that legislation, like the Allied Health Reinvestment Act, impacting allied health is being developed with our interests, and those of the professionals we educate, in mind.

Join the HEAL Coalition now, and through effective advocacy we can make a difference!

If you are interested in joining us, or would like more information regarding the HEAL Coalition, contact Executive Director Tom Netting at (202) 626-8553.