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## **NEW JERSEY TO ADDRESS NURSING EDUCATION CAPACITY All-Country Summit Aims to Spark Innovative Solutions to New Jersey Nurse Shortage**

BALTIMORE, MD – The United States is facing an unprecedented shortage of nurses that threatens the availability and quality of health care for our nation's citizens. This shortage will, in turn, increase the financial costs of health care through potential hospital errors that can be prevented with an adequate nurse workforce. As the 78 million aging baby boomers develop chronic diseases and other maladies of aging, their senior years will coincide with a massive retirement of large numbers of baby boomer registered nurses (RNs), resulting in a void in an adequate supply of nurses. In New Jersey, in just 5 years the shortage will become critical with a shortage of 18,734 nurses necessary to meet the increased need for nurses. This number includes the replacement of nurses leaving the workforce, plus the increased demand for nursing care. Compounding this severe shortage is a dearth of faculty needed to increase the educational capacity of schools. To meet the projected 2014 shortfall, nursing programs must double the number of graduates to meet the health care needs of the citizens in New Jersey.

A recent educational survey completed by the *New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing* identifies a severe shortage of doctorally prepared faculty. As of October 15, 2008, the university schools of nursing in New Jersey reported 19 (9.1%) vacant position among their 208 full time positions. In addition, the university leaders anticipate that 52 full time faculty would retire in 5 years (2014). When asked to rank the most important reasons for a faculty shortage, 53% of the university schools indicated a lack of budgeted faculty lines, while 40% responded that there were not enough qualified faculty applicants to fill all the positions. Sadly, New Jersey and the nation is on the cusp of a massive faculty shortage.

To help combat the problem, a joint collaborative of the *Center to Champion Nursing in America* (an initiative in partnership with the AARP, the AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) together with other collaborators such as the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor*, is convening the 2009 Nursing Education Capacity Summit today. The collaborative is bringing together multi-stakeholder teams from across the U.S., including New Jersey, to create innovative solutions to the nursing shortage.

As one of 18 lead states for the *Center to Champion Nursing in America* summit, New Jersey sent a team of multi-stakeholders to the summit. The representatives from New Jersey were Dana Egreczky, *New Jersey Chamber of Commerce*; Geri L. Dickson, *New*

*Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing*; and Yvonne Burgess, *New Jersey Council of Associate Degree Programs*. "New Jersey is indeed fortunate to have the wholehearted support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in sponsoring the *New Jersey Nurse Initiative* that will help to make New Jersey a stellar state in implementing collaborative strategies to address education and faculty issues.," said Geri L. Dickson, Co-team Leader. Other lead states participating include Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Summit participants will identify and develop approaches to improving nursing education capacity – with the ultimate goal of reversing the persistent nurse shortage that could leave New Jersey and the United States at risk of compromising the health of consumers as a result of an inadequate supply of Registered Nurses. The participants will share best practices in four key areas: strategic partnerships and resource alignment; policy and regulation; increasing faculty capacity and diversity; and redesigning educational curricula.

From coast to coast, these state teams have been advocating for policy changes and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships to increase nursing school enrollments and bring more nurse educators and practitioners into the health care workforce. In New Jersey, for example, the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce has partnered with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the New Jersey Nursing Educational Capacity Summit Team to address faculty shortage issues specific to New Jersey. This 5-year project is a quality initiative of the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation* that will directly improve the health care of consumers in New Jersey.

"We know having enough qualified nurses is critical to delivering high quality, cost effective , especially as Boomers age and experience more complex health conditions," said Susan Reinhard, Senior Vice President of the AARP Public Policy Institute and Chief Strategist for the Center to Champion Nursing in America. "And the strategies these state teams are implementing are key to reversing the shortage."

"The New Jersey business community is very concerned about the nurse shortage and its potential to increase the already high costs of doing business. Our corporations consider the nurse shortage an economic crisis, as well as a situation that has the potential to affect negatively the quality of life for every American," said Dana Egrerczky, the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and a presenter at the Summit. At the same time, Yvonne Burgess, a New Jersey representative of Associate Degree programs, reminded summit participants that "an essential component to graduating students who will become Registered Nurses is insuring there is an adequate number of nursing faculty to educate them,"

The summit is being held during an important time as U.S. leaders are making reform a priority. According to a post-election poll commissioned by the Center to Champion Nursing in America, nearly 90 percent of Americans agree that making sure there are enough nurses to monitor patient conditions, coordinate care and educate patients should be part of the effort to improve the quality of health care . In the annual Harris poll of professionals, nurses have repeatedly garnered the number one spot as Americans said they trusted nurses. Many

consumers of health care also recognize the important role nurses play in reducing costs in the areas of patient safety, care coordination and providing primary and preventive care.

“Nurses are a vital part of our system and this first of its kind summit will prove that by focusing on solutions, rather than simply pointing out the problems, we can make a difference,” said RWJF Senior Nursing Adviser Susan Hassmiller. “This summit will spark innovative ideas for these state teams and produce some of the answers states need to take back with them to reduce the shortage on the state and national level.”

*The **Center to Champion Nursing in America** is a joint initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A consumer-driven, national force for change, the Center seeks to ensure that this country has the nurses it needs to care for all of us, now and in the future. The Center focuses on two priorities: the nation's capacity to educate and to retain nurses. For more information, visit [www.championnursing.org](http://www.championnursing.org).*

*AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 34.5 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.*

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