



6117 Monona Drive • Madison, WI 53716 • 608-221-0383 • Fax 608 221-2788  
Info@wisconsinnurses.org • [www.wisconsinnurses.org](http://www.wisconsinnurses.org)

## **Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness**

The growth and aging of Wisconsin's population, along with the continued demand for accessible, high quality, cost-effective health care, creates an important demand for the services of RNs over the next 20 years. At the same time, many RNs are approaching retirement age and the nursing profession faces difficulties attracting new graduates and retaining the current workforce. This will create a public safety situation.

Registered nurses will be needed in all areas of practice beginning with the academic setting where the need for nurse educators is greatest. Without addressing the demand for RNs educated at the Master's or Doctoral Degree level first, it will be impossible to produce the nurses needed to care for Wisconsin's population.

Nursing education is expensive. It is expensive for the teaching institution because of the nurse instructor-to-nurse student ratio required for safe practice in the clinical setting. It is also expensive for the student. As with most other degrees, there are very few nursing students graduating without some sort of major financial debt. The available nursing loan forgiveness programs have not kept up with the demand.

For the residents of Wisconsin, there is the Wisconsin's Nursing Student Loan Program which is administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB). This agency provides loan forgiveness based on the number of years employed as a nurse in Wisconsin. In 2005, this program was expanded to allow students enrolled in programs that confer a Master's or Doctoral Degree in nursing to obtain a loan (maximum of \$3,000 per year and \$15,000 total) to defray the cost of tuition, fees and expenses. A portion of this loan can be forgiven if the person is employed in Wisconsin as a nurse educator. However, when the program was expanded to include Master's and Doctoral students, no additional funding was added to the program, which has remained funded at the same level since 2002-03.

### **Solution**

WNA is interested in legislative policies that address increasing the supply of nursing faculty and registered nurses. Loan forgiveness is one strategy as well as these other options:

- ?? Direct grants to colleges and universities preparing registered nurses and/or nurse faculty;
- ?? Increase the amount of grants and/or scholarships and/or forgiveness loans for students in basic registered nurse programs and/or;
- ?? Traineeships and/or grants and/or forgiveness loans for nurses enrolled in graduate nurse educator programs.