

1 State of Arkansas

*As Engrossed: H3/11/99: H3/29/99*

2 82nd General Assembly

3 Regular Session, 1999

HCR 1020

4  
5 By: Representatives Bond, Gullett  
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## 8 **HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

9 "REQUESTING THE *HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES* ON  
10 EDUCATION AND THE *HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES*  
11 ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND LABOR TO CONDUCT A STUDY  
12 *ON THE SHORTAGE OF REGISTERED NURSES, REGISTERED NURSE*  
13 *EDUCATORS, AND PHARMACISTS IN ARKANSAS; TO CONDUCT A*  
14 *STUDY OF THE RACIAL DISPARITY IN THOSE PROFESSIONS;*  
15 *AND TO MAKE* RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROPRIATE STATUTORY  
16 CHANGES. "

### 17 **Subtitle**

18  
19 "REQUESTING A STUDY ON THE SHORTAGE OF  
20 REGISTERED NURSES, REGISTERED NURSE  
21 EDUCATORS, AND PHARMACISTS AND THE  
22 RACIAL DISPARITY IN THOSE PROFESSIONS. "  
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24

25 WHEREAS, a strong health care industry is vital to the economic  
26 development of the State of Arkansas and to the health of its citizens.  
27 Arkansas has one of the highest elderly populations in the nation, yet for the  
28 past five (5) years, ranked last in the nation in terms of overall health and  
29 access to health care; and  
30

31 WHEREAS, as early as 1996, Arkansas hospitals began to experience a  
32 shortage of RNS. Since that time the shortage has grown worse, with some  
33 rural hospitals reporting up to thirty (30%) of their budgeted RN positions  
34 unfilled. This growing shortage is nationwide and even worldwide, extending  
35 beyond U.S. borders to Great Britain and many other English-speaking  
36 countries; and

1  
2 WHEREAS, while RN shortages have been cyclical in the past, this  
3 shortage is unique and will not be easily solved; and  
4

5 WHEREAS, contributing factors include: an aging population, particularly  
6 those individuals over eighty-five (85) who require more health care; an aging  
7 RN workforce with fewer younger RNs entering the market; a declining student  
8 enrollment in RN nursing education programs; fewer nurses interested in  
9 teaching and the aging of nurse educators; the working conditions of RNs  
10 (particularly those in hospitals) and nurse educators; low RN and nurse  
11 educator salaries; and  
12

13 WHEREAS, Arkansas is entering this shortage with the least educated  
14 nursing workforce in the nation and the lowest RN-to-patient ratios in the  
15 nation. The state's average of RNs per one hundred thousand (100,000)  
16 population is six hundred and eighty three (683) compared to seven hundred and  
17 ninety eight (798) nationally, fourteen and four percent (14.4%) below the  
18 U.S. average. The state is above the national average in number of LPNs  
19 compared to RNs, and the number of associate degree- and diploma-prepared RNs  
20 compared to baccalaureate prepared RNs. This leaves Arkansas with a smaller  
21 pool of RNs to assume independent roles and of baccalaureate prepared nurses  
22 available for recruiting to graduate school and eventually nursing faculty  
23 positions. Without an adequate supply of RN nurse educators, nursing programs  
24 cannot produce the greater number of graduates that will be so desperately  
25 needed in the near future; and  
26

27 WHEREAS, since 1995 there has been a forty four and forty four percent  
28 (44.44%) growth in the number of unfilled full-time nurse faculty positions  
29 and a decrease of six hundred and seventy two (672) students enrolled in RN  
30 education programs. Nationally, the average age of the working RN today is  
31 forty five and three (45.3), while only eleven percent (11%) of Arkansas' RNs  
32 are below thirty (30). Those RNs forty (40) or older compose fifty-three  
33 (53%) of the state's workforce and eleven percent (11%) are sixty (60) plus.  
34 In the next few years, the state's graduation rate from RN programs will be  
35 one thousand (1000) or less per year, resulting in a major shortfall between  
36 RNs produced and those at or near retirement age. Compounding this shortfall

1 will be the increased demand for RNs.

2  
3 NOW THEREFORE,

4 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EIGHTY-SECOND GENERAL  
5 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:

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7 *THAT the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education and the House and*  
8 *Senate Interim Committees on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor conduct a study*  
9 *to examine the RN workforce and nurse educator and pharmacist shortages, the*  
10 *racial disparity in those professions, to identify contributing factors, and*  
11 *to recommend a plan of action for solving these shortages and disparities.*  
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13 The committees are requested to include testimony from the following in  
14 their study:

- 15  
16 1. Representatives from RN nursing education programs;  
17 2. Representatives from nursing administrators in hospitals and  
18 other health care agencies;  
19 3. Representatives from the Arkansas Department of Health;  
20 4. Representatives from the Arkansas State Board of Nursing;  
21 5. Representatives from the Arkansas Hospital Association;  
22 6. Representatives from the insurance industry;  
23 7. Representatives from community health centers and rural health  
24 clinics;  
25 8. Representatives from the state's higher education  
26 institutions, and  
27 9. Other stake holders, healthcare consumers, or individuals as  
28 identified by the committees to contribute to the study.  
29

30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

31 THAT the study be concluded on or before July 1, 2000 in time for any  
32 recommendations for proposed legislation to be prepared for the Eighty-Third  
33 General Assembly of Arkansas in January, 2001.

34 /s/ Bond, et al.  
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