

Dear AAOHN Members,

As many of you are aware, the federal government has recently enacted the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” (OBBBA), which will take effect on July 1, 2026.

This legislation introduced a **significant change in the classification of advanced nursing degrees** and presents serious implications for the future of the nursing profession.

Changes to Degree Classification

Under this new law, graduate nursing programs are removed from the official designation of “professional degrees” and reclassified alongside general graduate programs. This shift substantially diminishes the recognition of the advanced, specialized education required of advanced practice nurses.

Financial Impact on Graduate Nursing Education

As a result of this reclassification, financial support for nurses pursuing graduate degrees will be severely reduced:

- **Significant Loan Limitations:** Federal unsubsidized loans for graduate nursing students are now capped at \$20,000 per year and a \$100,000 lifetime maximum.
- **Disparity Across Health Professions:** Physicians, dentists, and veterinarians retain their professional degree status and continue to have access to \$50,000 per year and more than \$200,000 in lifetime federal loan funding.
- **Elimination of Graduate PLUS Loans:** Graduate PLUS loans will no longer be available to nursing students.

Consequences for the Workforce

These changes will force aspiring masters prepared OHNs, Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), and other doctoral nursing students to rely on high-interest private loans or personal resources to complete their education. Treating advanced nursing education differently from other clinical professions undermines the value of nursing expertise, restricts career advancement for nurses, and exacerbates existing shortages in primary care and anesthesia services nationwide. It will also greatly impact the next generation of nurses by making it harder to become a professor of nursing, which will exacerbate the already problematic shortage of nursing instructors.

Recently, bipartisan legislation was introduced in the House:

[H.R. 8691 Nursing is a Professional Degree Act](#) which would amend the current list of professional degrees to include MSN, MSN, DNP, DNAP, or Ph.D. in nursing.

The bipartisan bill in the Senate is: [S. 4568 - A bill to amend the definition of professional student in the Higher Education Act of 1965.](#)

If you support nurses having access to professional degree graduate school federal loans, we ask that you contact your legislators to either thank them or ask them to support this new bipartisan legislation in the House and Senate.

To look up your legislator go to: <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

[Click here](#) to find out if your legislator is already a cosponsor of this legislation in the House of Representatives.

[Click here](#) to find out if your legislator is already a cosponsor in the Senate

Depending on whether your legislator is a cosponsor or not, use the sample scripts below to craft your personal message (This message can be delivered via email or via phone call).

Sample Script for Thanking a House of Representatives Cosponsor

Dear Representative _____,

As a nurse, and your constituent, I want to thank you for your support of graduate nursing education by cosponsoring [H.R. 8691 Nursing is a Professional Degree Act](#). Thank you for helping nurses to pursue careers as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), specializing in areas such as psychiatry, neonatal care, adult-gerontology, or nurse anesthesia. This legislation will also support the education of the next generation of nursing executives, health systems administrators, nursing professors, and clinical nurse leaders. I deeply appreciate your support of professional nursing.

Your constituent,

Sample Script for Thanking a Senate Cosponsor

Dear Senator _____,

As a nurse, and your constituent, I want to thank you for your support of graduate nursing education by cosponsoring [S. 4568 - A bill to amend the definition of professional student in the Higher Education Act of 1965](#). Thank you for helping nurses to pursue careers as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), specializing in areas such as psychiatry, neonatal care, adult-gerontology, or nurse anesthesia. This legislation will also support the education of the next generation of nursing executives, health systems administrators, nursing professors, and clinical nurse leaders. I deeply appreciate your support of professional nursing.

Your constituent,

Sample Script Asking your Representative to Cosponsor this Bipartisan Legislation

Dear Representative _____

As a nurse, and your constituent, I am asking you to please support graduate nursing education by cosponsoring [H.R. 8691 Nursing is a Professional Degree Act](#). This bipartisan legislation would rectify a recent change which has excluded nurses from applying for professional graduate degree federal loans to continue their education. Without access to these professional category graduate loans, nurses will have to rely on high-interest private loans or personal resources to complete their education, which many nurses simply cannot afford to do. This will lead to a reduction of master's and doctoral prepared

nurses (including nurse practitioners) at a time when these nurses are needed more than ever. There is already a [shortage of qualified nursing faculty](#) which is affecting our ability to train the next generation of nurses. A graduate degree (specifically a DNP or PhD) is often the baseline requirement to teach at the university level or lead essential clinical research initiatives.

This legislation, once enacted, will allow nurses to continue to pursue careers as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), specializing in areas such as psychiatry, neonatal care, adult-gerontology, or nurse anesthesia. It will also support the education of the next generation of nursing executives, nursing faculty, and clinical nurse leaders.

(AAOHN Member - This would be an opportunity to add your personal story / perspective on the importance of nursing graduate education)

Please support professional nursing by cosponsoring [H.R. 8691 Nursing is a Professional Degree Act](#).

Thank you, your constituent,

Sample Script Asking your Senator to Cosponsor this Bipartisan Legislation

Dear Senator _____,

As a nurse, and your constituent, I am asking you to please support graduate nursing education by cosponsoring [S. 4568 - A bill to amend the definition of professional student in the Higher Education Act of 1965](#). This bipartisan legislation would rectify a recent change which has excluded nurses from applying for professional graduate degree federal loans to continue their education. Without access to these professional category graduate loans, nurses will have to rely on high-interest private loans or personal resources to complete their education, which many nurses simply cannot afford to do. This will lead to a reduction of master's and doctoral prepared nurses (including nurse practitioners) at a time when these nurses are needed more than ever. There is already a [shortage of qualified nursing faculty](#) which is affecting our ability to train the next generation of nurses. A graduate degree (specifically a DNP or PhD) is often the baseline requirement to teach at the university level or lead essential clinical research initiatives.

This legislation, once enacted, will allow nurses to continue to pursue careers as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), specializing in areas such as psychiatry, neonatal care, adult-gerontology, or nurse anesthesia. It will also support the education of the next generation of nursing executives, nursing faculty, and clinical nurse leaders.

(AAOHN Member - This would be an opportunity to add your personal story / perspective on the importance of nursing graduate education)

Please support professional nursing by cosponsoring [S. 4568 - A bill to amend the definition of professional student in the Higher Education Act of 1965](#).

Thank you, your constituent,
