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GOVERNORTIM MURRAY  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**Media Contact**Lauren Jones (LG)  
617-725-4000Heather Johnson (EOE)  
617-979-8352

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**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MURRAY ANNOUNCES NEW FUNDING TO SUPPORT NURSING EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH****Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Awards \$300,000 Grant to Create More Highly Educated Nursing Workforce**

BOSTON – Tuesday, August 21, 2012 – Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray today announced Massachusetts has received a \$300,000 national grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to help current and future nurses seeking to advance their academic preparation within the nursing profession. This funding will enhance the Patrick-Murray Administration's overall plan to support jobs, education and workforce development and helps to address the growing demands and challenges of the health care environment currently facing the country.

Massachusetts is one of nine states chosen to receive a \$300,000 grant to support academic progression in nursing. The funds will support the Commonwealth's efforts in partnership with the Organization of Nurse Leaders (ONL), to pursue effective strategies in nursing education. Currently, 55 percent of Massachusetts nurses hold Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) or above. A 2010 report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), recommended that 80 percent of nurses be educated at the BSN level or higher.

"Massachusetts has been a national leader in providing universal health care for all residents and we continue to address the rising costs of health care," said Lieutenant Governor Murray. "With the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, our work to advance educational opportunities for currently practicing nurses as well as new candidates will ensure more nurses are prepared to address patient health care needs in the years ahead."

"This grant will aid efforts to better coordinate the world-class care that the Commonwealth is known for," said Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. JudyAnn Bigby. "Nurses are key members of coordinated care teams, which ultimately deliver better patient outcomes and lower health care costs."

"These funds will further our efforts to create a comprehensive and more aligned workforce development system that meets the needs of our students, employers and Commonwealth as a whole," said Education Secretary Paul Reville.

Specifically, the grant funds will support the ongoing collaboration between the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and the ONL, who are working together to develop "seamless academic progressions" for currently employed and newly credentialed nurses. Currently, Massachusetts community colleges are partnering with state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses to develop pathways for registered nurses who wish to earn bachelor's degrees in nursing. This initiative is helping to prepare nurses to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century health care challenges that will require them to coordinate patient care amongst a variety of practitioners and agencies, to help patients manage chronic illnesses, and to utilize advanced technology to improve patient outcomes.

"We have made enormous strides in this work because of a highly effective partnership between the Department of Higher Education and the nursing community," said Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland. "This collaboration gives us an excellent model of how educators and workforce development partners can work together to produce real change in the lives of Massachusetts residents."

"This is a true leadership story and speaks to what can be achieved in Massachusetts through the power of partnerships," said Sharon Gale, Chief Executive Officer of the Organization of Nurse Leaders. "The government and industry representatives represented on the Massachusetts Action Coalition will shape academic progression over the next two years. This is a beginning toward achieving our shared goals."

The announcement builds on the Patrick-Murray Administration's plan to achieve workforce development goals in four key sectors

– health care, life sciences, information technology and advanced manufacturing. One of the primary goals is to better align existing educational and workforce training programs across the state with clearly defined industry-specific pathways to employment. In working across state agencies including the Executive Offices of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Housing and Economic Development, the Administration continues to bring together expertise and resources to develop a workforce pipeline aligned with labor market demands.

For more information about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation please visit: <http://www.rwjf.org/about/>

For more information about the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's Nursing and Allied Health Initiative, please visit: <http://www.mass.edu/currentinit/NiHome.asp>.

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