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Boren's \$650,000 funding request for NSU included in House legislation

WASHINGTON D.C. – U.S. Congressman Dan Boren announced today that \$650,000 has been included in the Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations Act of FY2011 for expanded health professions education and training programs at Northeastern State University.

In 2009-2010, NSU initiated a public/private partnership among several members of the Eastern Workforce Investment Board Healthcare Coalition and implemented a culturally sensitive Medical Laboratory Science program to address clinical workforce shortages. These funds, which were approved late last week in a hearing before the House Appropriation Subcommittee for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, will be used specifically to expand the existing American Indian School of Health Professions and implement two new allied health programs that address health practitioner shortages in Eastern Oklahoma.

"There is no question that healthcare practitioner shortages in Eastern Oklahoma are having a negative impact on the region, and require immediate, innovative approaches to remedy the situation. This directed funding will improve healthcare for both citizens of the Second Congressional District, as well as the entire state of Oklahoma, by helping train greater numbers of health practitioners who are from this region. I am honored to work with NSU on this important effort, and I pledge to continue working to make certain this funding is included in this legislation throughout the appropriations process," Boren said.

"We are delighted that the House Appropriations subcommittee has chosen to recommend our health care initiative for funding," said NSU President Don Betz. "We are particularly appreciative of Congressman Boren's leadership and advocacy with his fellow members of Congress so they recognized that he supported NSU's request as a priority within the 2nd Congressional District and Oklahoma."

Also laudatory was Dr. Martin Venneman, dean of the College of Science and Health Professions at NSU. Venneman authored the proposal in collaboration with more than a dozen health care industry partners and supporters.

"As with the rest of the nation, Oklahoma is facing severe health care shortages in a diversity of practice areas," Venneman said. "These shortages are especially prevalent in Eastern Oklahoma and are spread throughout every county in the 2nd District. Given his familiarity with the region, Congressman Boren knows the impact these shortages will have on future generations of Eastern Oklahomans if allowed to persist without remedy. He has taken a collaborative, leadership role to address this challenge and has worked effectively to ensure the future health and vitality of the constituency he serves. We are proud to be a partner in these efforts and look forward to doing our part to address the practitioner shortages that exist."

Current healthcare worker shortages negatively impact many aspects of healthcare delivery, continuity, and quality, which is also compounded in medically underserved rural areas where access to healthcare is often already severely limited. As healthcare institutions and educators struggle to keep pace with increased demand for services, the nation's population is experiencing an increase in aging longevity and is requiring a substantially greater number and diversity of services. Oklahoma's hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, ambulatory care clinics, physician offices and clinics, schools, public health service agencies and other organizations in the state are all hindered by current and future shortages.

The funding that is included in the current legislation would provide administrative support to expand and solidify the multi-institutional partnership comprising the American Indian School for Health Professions, enable implementation of a Masters in Nursing program to train nurse educators capable of significantly increasing the healthcare workforce for the region, and allow for the implementation of a Masters in Occupational Therapy program focused toward meeting the

healthcare needs of the population served.

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