

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director General
World Health Organization
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WHPA supports WHO's work on the economics of health for all and calls for investment in the health workforce

Dear Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

On behalf of the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), I am writing to express our collective support for the World Health Organization (WHO)'s work on the economics of health for all and to call for investment in the health workforce to be clearly and explicitly embedded within the final Strategy on the economics of health for all (2026–2030).

The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) brings together the global organizations representing the world's dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists and physicians and speaks for over 47 million health care professionals in more than 179 countries or territories. WHPA works to improve global health and the quality of patient care and facilitates collaboration among the health professions and major stakeholders. WHPA's member organizations are in official relations with WHO and as WHPA have a collective Memorandum of Understanding with WHO.

WHPA strongly endorses WHO's work to reframe health expenditure as an investment that brings strong returns in the form of population health, reduced health system costs, economic growth, and social stability and security. Our interventions at the upcoming WHO Executive Board meetings will affirm our support and commitment to advancing evidence-based health workforce investment policies, and we stand ready to collaborate with WHO on this work.

We emphasize that any comprehensive economic strategy for health must recognize the central role of health professionals as the backbone of health systems and a foundational pillar of inclusive, resilient economies.

We note that the [final report of the WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All](#), which informs the draft Strategy, directly recommends that all member states “treat health and wellbeing, health workers and health systems as a long-term investment, not a short-term cost”. [Resolution A77/A/CONF./2](#) passed at the 77th World Health Assembly further explicitly recognized “the critical importance of investments in health systems, including in the health workforce”.

We welcome the recommendations outlined in the current [Report and Draft Strategy](#), which call on member states to “reform labour policy as it relates to the health labour force, and protect workers’ health” and for action to address “workforce shortages and skills mismatches”.

However, we believe that these recommendations would be strengthened through

1. more explicit recognition of the economic benefits that come with strengthening health workforce capacity as a determinant of macroeconomic and societal resilience, and
2. clear recommendations for investment in the health workforce as a high-return economic accelerator.

We note that the health workforce was not included as a “best buy” in WHO’s most recent report on the [global investment case for noncommunicable diseases](#) (NCDs), an oversight that risks undervaluing the critical role and return on investment of the health professionals who deliver the vast majority of interventions for NCDs and other major health challenges.

Chronic underinvestment in health professionals is contributing to our persistent and grave health workforce shortages and leading to service shortages and unmet health needs as well as jeopardizing the quality, safety and continuity of care. In the face of these systemic challenges, we must urgently recognize the vital importance of health workforce investment based on compelling economic evidence. [Recent data](#) suggests that lessening our global health workforce shortage would add \$1.1 trillion to the world’s economy while cutting 7% of the global disease burden. All of WHPA’s member organizations have done significant work demonstrating the economic case for capacitating, educating, retaining and protecting health professionals, which is among the highest-return public investments governments can make as it supports economic

growth, social stability, national and international security, and universal health coverage (UHC). This includes the International Council of Nurses' reports *The Economic Power of Care* and *Caring for Nurses Strengthens Economies*.

Investment in human resources for health is a non-negotiable pillar of an economy of health for all.

Therefore, WHPA calls on WHO to

- ensure that health workforce investment is explicitly embedded in the Strategy on the economics of health for all;
- strengthen the capacity of Member States to finance health systems and workforces with evidence on economic and health returns;
- work with health professional organizations to support the implementation of the Strategy.

We recognize WHO's strong leadership on this vitally important agenda and stand ready to provide ongoing support.

Sincerely,



Howard Catton,
WHPA Chair and CEO of the International Council of Nurses (ICN)