



Letters to the Editor

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Nursing scholarships benefit all of Florida

I am writing to commend the Legislature and the *Tallahassee Democrat* for recognizing the importance of the ABLE and FRAG tuition assistance grants. I have been a registered nurse for more than 35 years and am currently pursuing my bachelor's of science in nursing while teaching future medical assistants at Keiser University.

Keiser has nearly 900 students in the associate-degree nursing program statewide. As is typical with Keiser graduates, about 85 percent will remain in Florida, filling critical needs in hospitals and medical facilities. It is safe to estimate that more than half of those students will want to continue for their bachelor's degree. It is also very apparent that these students who have met the same standards as public nursing students will not be able to find a place in the overcrowded state university system to pursue their bachelor's degrees.

For these reasons — increasing baccalaureate production in Florida, filling the statewide nursing work-force shortages, and public enrollment caps — providing funding to students who have found success and space in regionally accredited private universities deserve the modest amount that the ABLE grant provides. Many of these students are first-generation college students, single parents, and even more hold full-time jobs and pay taxes while pursuing their degrees.

Private universities, as you mentioned, cost very little to the state and taxpayers, yet they give back tremendously in the form of corporate taxes while providing the state a skilled work force and contributing members of society. The *Democrat*'s and the Legislature's interest and support of these deserving students is very well-placed.

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