Hunt fiddles with his phone, while nurse education bursaries burn

Earlier this month, I sat in the gallery of the House of Commons watching the parliamentary debate over proposed government changes to nurse education funding. This was a phenomenal moment for the #bursaryorbust campaign, highlighting how we are being heard.

Shadow health secretary Heidi Alexander opened the debate with a brilliant, well-researched speech that tied in all the evidence about the bursary changes, including the potential impact of the bursary loss on the quality and numbers of students entering the nursing profession.

Health minister Ben Gummer said the bursary loss was ‘exciting’, and trotted out the old argument about how removing bursaries would open up more places for nursing students despite health workers, unions, students and professional bodies advising otherwise.

But it was Jeremy Hunt, who spent most of the debate fiddling with his phone rather than listening to the opposition’s arguments, who infuriated me the most. As health secretary, it is his duty to listen to the future workforce of the NHS, and I was pleased when Commons speaker John Bercow reprimanded him for his actions.

The move by Labour to block the changes was defeated, but the debate still shows how important the bursary is to the future of the NHS. We must keep this momentum going, so nurses, it is time to roar. Let’s protest, speak out, and push this government to back down on these disastrous changes before it is too late.

Danielle Tiplady, final year nursing student at King’s College London

CALL FOR SUPPORT TO ENSURE CAMPAIGN IS A ROARING SUCCESS

The #bursaryorbust debate in parliament was a clear example of why we must continue our fight for future students. It is not just the NHS bursary, but Agenda for Change and safe staffing that the government wants to target, and we must draw a line in the sand on this.

You only have to look at the resilience of the junior doctors to see what can happen when a profession is united. If 54,000 junior doctors can bring a government to heel, what can 377,000 NHS nurses do?

The #bursaryorbust campaign is asking all staff and students to join us at parliament on May 25 between 10am and 4pm to lobby their MP. And on June 4, we are holding a demonstration at 1pm at St Thomas’ Hospital in London where we will march – and roar – in a united front.

The NHS will last as long as folk have the will to fight for it.

Anthony Johnson, president-elect of the Nursing & Midwifery Society

AWARDS EVENT IS THE TIP OF THE OUTSTANDING CARE ICEBERG

On Friday May 6, the RCNi Nurse Awards 2016 took place at the Westminster Park Plaza Hotel in London. It was a wonderful occasion, and the many examples of excellent work by nurses – individually and in teams – impressed colleagues, families and friends. It was lovely to see nurses praised for their work, and hear how thrilled the finalists were to be shortlisted.

Several times during the evening, the nurses were reminded they were all winners, irrespective of whether they won their category or not. The mood of the evening confirmed this.

But these nurses are just the tip of the iceberg. There are so many others out there who provide equally outstanding care to patients and deserve just as much respect and recognition. With this year’s awards