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FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 1029 (Senators Hershey and Eckardt)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Rural Public Institutions of Higher Education - Nurse Practitioner and Physician
Assistant Students - Recruitment

This bill requires each public institution of higher education located in a rural area of the State to develop and implement a program to recruit nurse practitioner students and physician assistant students. The bill also requires institutions and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to report annually on programs established under the bill, as specified. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: As explained below, public four-year institutions of higher education in rural areas can likely develop the required recruitment program using existing resources; however, a more extensive recruitment program with outside advertisement buys could easily cost \$100,000 or more for each institution. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: As explained below, local community colleges in rural areas can develop the required recruitment program using existing resources; however, a more extensive recruitment program with outside advertisement buys could easily cost \$100,000 or more for each institution. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Approximately 80% of Maryland’s land area is “rural” and about 25% of Maryland’s people live in a rural area. According to the definition of “rural” used by the [2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan](#), 18 of Maryland’s 24 local jurisdictions are

considered “rural.” This definition excludes Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties. However, this definition does not align with the federal definition of “rural” used to designate Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, parts of Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Queen Anne’s, and Talbot counties are rural HPSAs in at least one type of service (*i.e.*, primary care, dental health, or mental health).

Nurse Practitioners

In Maryland, an individual must obtain certification from the Board of Nursing prior to commencing practice as a nurse practitioner. A nurse practitioner is one of four types of advanced practice registered nurses. Among other requirements, to become certified by the Board of Nursing as a nurse practitioner, an individual must have graduated from an accredited graduate-level program for nurse practitioners at the master’s level or higher that is approved by the board and meets specified requirements related to accreditation.

As of February 27, 2019, four public institutions of higher education in Maryland have [nurse practitioner programs approved by the Board of Nursing](#): Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Salisbury University (SU), and University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus (UMB). In addition, there are approved programs at Johns Hopkins University, and the Uniformed Services University of Health Services. Programs have different specialties such as adult, family, neonatal, and women’s health care.

Physician Assistants

In Maryland, to practice as a physician assistant an individual must meet the education requirements set by the Board of Physicians. In general, an individual must have graduated from a physician assistant educational program that was accredited at the time of graduation by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, the Accreditation Review Commission on the Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), or their successor organization. In addition, an individual who graduates from a physician assistant training program after October 1, 2003, must have either a bachelor’s degree or at least 120 credit hours of education at the college or university level. Finally, an individual must pass the national certifying examination for physician assistants given by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants or its successor organization.

According to ARC-PA, which is the current accreditation body for physician assistant programs, physician assistant programs must transition to conferring a graduate degree upon all physician assistant students who matriculate into the program after 2020. Programs that are not in compliance with the degree requirement by January 1, 2021, will have their accreditation withdrawn.

Two programs in Maryland are currently [accredited by ARC-PA](#) to offer a physician assistant program; both are collaborative programs between a community college and a public four-year institution of higher education. Specifically, Anne Arundel Community College collaborates with UMB and the Community College of Baltimore County-Essex campus collaborates with Towson University. In addition, Frostburg State University (FSU) intends to open a physician assistant program in fall 2019 and has applied for accreditation. A physician assistant program at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) lost its accreditation effective September 2016.

State Expenditures: It is assumed that public four-year institutions of higher education in rural areas can likely develop the required recruitment program for nurse practitioner students and physician assistant students using existing resources. This estimate assumes that no new nurse practitioner or physician assistant programs are developed, but that institutions direct students to existing programs at either their institution or other institutions. A cost-effective recruitment program could include elements such as a website with information about existing nurse practitioner and physician assistant programs and on-campus fliers and information tables.

However, a more extensive recruitment program with an outside advertisement campaign could easily cost \$100,000 or more. According to a news report from 2017, advertisers can expect to pay from \$200 to \$1,500 for a 30-second commercial on local television; \$500 to \$8,000 for local radio per week; \$693 to \$40,855 for a quarter-page ad in a regional newspaper; and \$0.31 to \$2 per click for digital media ads. A nationwide recruitment program could cost \$500 million over six years according a recent estimates by a public university.

“Rural area” is not defined; however, by one definition, the following public four-year institutions are in “rural areas”: FSU, SU, St. Mary’s College of Maryland, and UMES.

Local Expenditures: Likewise, it is assumed that local community colleges in rural areas can likely develop the required recruitment program for nurse practitioner students and physician assistant students using existing resources. However, as explained above, a more extensive recruitment program could easily cost \$100,000 or more. By one definition, the following local community colleges are in “rural areas”: Allegany College of Maryland, Carroll Community College, Cecil College, Chesapeake College, College of Southern Maryland, Frederick Community College, Garrett College, Hagerstown Community College, Harford Community College, and Wor-Wic Community College.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; University System of Maryland; St. Mary's College of Maryland; paeaonline.org; *FitSmallBusiness.com*; delmarvanow.com; aacc.edu; arc-pa.org; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510