



## CARE BRAVELY

SB523 – Occupations and Professions – Licenses, Certificates, and Registration - Immigrants  
House Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs – February 17, 2022  
Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations and Community  
Development LifeBridge Health  
Position: **SUPPORT**

---

I am writing in SUPPORT of SB523. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

Hospitals in Maryland and across the nation faced staffing burdens even before the COVID-19 pandemic and this latest surge. Maryland hospitals now have over 3,900 nursing vacancies—a 50% jump since late August.

More specifically for LifeBridge Health institutions, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants comprise 40% of our workforce. These categories have experienced employee turnover rates of nearly 28%, one of the highest rates among all staff categories, compared to a combined turnover rate in all other categories of 22%. Nursing and medical provider positions (RNs, NPs, MDs, etc.) have employee vacancy rates of 26% as of 1/31/2022—an increase of 10% since 2/1/2021. Overall hospital employee vacancies rose nearly 6% throughout our system over the past year, one of the highest rates of increase in recent years.

These vacancies mean fewer caregivers at the bedside, limiting capacity to care for patients, both those with COVID-19 and those having other serious conditions such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes as well as surgical patients. SB523 aims to ensure every qualified health care professional can obtain a license to practice in Maryland and we welcome the opportunity to hire all qualified applicants at LifeBridge Health.

The current spike in health care workforce challenges that has led to this crisis predated the COVID pandemic, and this spike was further exacerbated during COVID. Unfortunately, our projections indicate that these challenges will continue long after the recent and future “surge” periods. Therefore, we support any reasonable means to increase the number of health care professionals available in the state, and we view this proposal as “low hanging fruit” in this process.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for SB523.

Contact: Martha D. Nathanson, Esq.  
Vice President, Government Relations & Community Development  
[mnathans@lifebridgehealth.org](mailto:mnathans@lifebridgehealth.org)  
Mobile: 443-286-4812