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HB 625 – Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland – Establishment Act

Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of House Bill 625. This bill establishes the “Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland.” The Commission will determine the extent of the health care workforce shortage in the state, analyze turnover rates of health care workers, examine the capacity of state educational institutions to meet the demand for health occupations, and determine what changes are needed to enhance incentives for individuals to enter and stay in the health care workforce in Maryland.

As part of its mission to make healthcare affordable and accessible, CareFirst is committed to providing our members with access to high quality, patient centric care. We rely heavily on our partnerships with the provider community in Maryland to deliver on our promise of providing services that meet the needs of our members. When there is a shortfall in the number of health care providers available, quality declines and the health and safety of patients and providers are put at risk. Further, workforce shortages limit consumer choices when selecting health care providers that best meet their geographic, financial, and personal preferences for care.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of the health care system in our state, particularly as it relates to our ability to keep up with demand amidst unprecedented shortages of available health care providers. Further, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 22% of Maryland’s population will be 60 and older by the year 2030, an increase of 26% from 2012. Older adults use far more health care services than do younger groups and the majority of older adults have at least one chronic condition that requires care. The Maryland Hospital Association reported nearly 4,000 nursing vacancies throughout the state in a February 1, 2022 [press release](#), yet hospitals are reporting higher than normal inpatient volume. If not strategically addressed, greater utilization of the health care system coupled with inadequate provider staff levels will jeopardize Marylanders’ ability to access quality care.

HB 625 will provide a platform for data collection and analysis on the root causes of insufficient health care staffing levels facing our hospitals, nursing homes, and other important settings where Marylanders seek health care. Informed by its findings, this Commission will work to identify both short and long-term solutions to address the health care workforce shortage, ensuring that Marylanders have robust choices to fit their health care provider needs in the future.

CareFirst strongly supports the policy goals advanced by HB 625. This bill will result in much needed support to our provider community who is on the front lines in keeping Marylanders healthy. We look forward to partnering with legislators, health departments, providers, and other stakeholders to ensure the state has an adequate supply of high caliber health care professionals to provide quality health care to all Marylanders.

We urge a favorable report.

About CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

In its 84th year of service, CareFirst, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a not-for-profit healthcare company which, through its affiliates and subsidiaries, offers a comprehensive portfolio of health insurance products and administrative services to 3.4 million individuals and employers in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. In 2019, CareFirst invested \$43 million to improve overall health, and increase the accessibility, affordability, safety, and quality of healthcare throughout its market areas. To learn more about CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, visit our website at www.carefirst.com and our transforming healthcare page at www.carefirst.com/transformation, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#).