



# Sheppard Pratt

## Written Testimony

### House Health and Government Operations Committee

#### **SB 960 / HB 611 State Board of Nursing – Sunset Extension, Licensure Exceptions, and Board Operations and Membership**

**February 7, 2023**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Sheppard Pratt thanks the Maryland General Assembly for your longstanding leadership and support of mental and behavioral health providers in Maryland. This testimony outlines the Sheppard Pratt **support of SB 960 / HB 611 State Board of Nursing – Sunset Extension, Licensure Exceptions, and Board Operations and Membership**. It is our hope that the Maryland General Assembly vote a favorable report on this legislation.

With more than 400 licensed inpatient beds, 160 programs and 380 sites of care across Maryland, Sheppard Pratt cares for every Marylander, and is the only hospital that receives patients from the emergency department of every other hospital in the State. Between physical locations in 16 Maryland jurisdictions and through telehealth, Sheppard Pratt serves Marylanders in every corner of the State.

Being able to staff our programs adequately and clinically appropriately is key to our ability to effectively serve our patients. Our front-line staff, particularly our nurses, dedicate themselves every day to the mission of the organization, caring for some of our most vulnerable residents. The health care workers licensed and certified under the Board of Nursing are critical to organizations like Sheppard Pratt. According to the most recent Maryland Hospital Association data, Registered Nurses & Licensed Practical Nurses/nursing assistants make up 39 percent of Maryland's hospital workforce.

It is important to emphasize that delays in licensure and certification directly impact access to care. Inadequate staff levels lead to unstaffed beds. Unstaffed beds can lead to an increase in emergency department boarders. And increased boarders in emergency departments leads to challenging clinical situations, staff burnout, and less than ideal patient care.

The Board of Nursing needs to do better. Problems that previously existed have only been exacerbated by the pandemic and the cyberattack in 2021. It is critically important that the Board of Nursing be modernized and held accountable for ensuring that highly qualified nurses are licensed in a timely fashion, allowing clinical programs around the state to be appropriately staffed.

This legislation helps to ensure the Board is staffed to communicate with licensees and solve issues. The Joint Commission will change any hospital to conditional accreditation status if one nurse works one day without an active license. Nurses are leaving the field due to stress, burnout, and short staffing. They should not have to with challenges with the license board for timely renewals.



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Sheppard Pratt urges you to vote a favorable report on **SB960 / HB 611 State Board of Nursing – Sunset Extension, Licensure Exceptions, and Board Operations and Membership.**

## **About Sheppard Pratt**

Sheppard Pratt is the nation's largest private, nonprofit provider of mental health, substance use, developmental disability, special education, and social services in the country. A nationwide resource, Sheppard Pratt provides services across a comprehensive continuum of care, spanning both hospital- and community-based resources. Since its founding in 1853, Sheppard Pratt has been innovating the field through research, best practice implementation, and a focus on improving the quality of mental health care on a global level. Sheppard Pratt has been consistently ranked as a top national psychiatric hospital by *U.S. News & World Report* for nearly 30 years.