



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 13, 2024

The Honorable Benjamin Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 545 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award - Public School Nurses – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 545 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award - Public School Nurses.

House Bill (HB) 545 expands the Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award within the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to include school nurses who meet specified eligibility criteria. The Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) administers the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program including repayment of higher education loans for program awardees.

In a Maryland Public School Health Workforce Assessment Survey conducted in 2023, the majority of Maryland School Health Services Coordinators cited “insufficient staff levels” as a reason for impeding their work in serving students health needs for the school years 2020-21 and 2021-22. The survey also cited salaries as a challenge for recruitment of school nurses, as hourly wages for school nurses nationally are 75% of hospital nurses’ hourly earnings. Additionally, many schools face high nurse turnover rates.

The Department supports the incentive program proposed by HB 545 as another avenue to recruit and retain nurses in the state, and alleviate the school nursing staff shortage as it removes financial barriers for school nurses participating in the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program.

If you have any further questions, please contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" and the last name "Scott" clearly distinguishable.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary