

**FAVORABLE
House Bill 545**

**Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program – Nancy Grasmick Public
School Professional Award – Public School Nurses**

**House Appropriations Committee
February 13, 2024**

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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 545, which would expand the Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award within the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to include public school nurses who are licensed as registered nurses, provide health services in public schools, and are employed by a county school system or a local health department to provide school health services.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Last year, this body made a timely investment in the recruitment and retention of educators and school-based mental health professionals by expanding eligibility for the Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award, which is under the umbrella of the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program. This expansion and the addition of \$5 million to the program enhanced a previously underutilized resource. In its expansion, however, school nurses were left out.

Though the larger Janet L. Hoffman program issues awards to nurses, school nurses are excluded. This should be rectified, especially as the school nursing profession faces growing shortages due to heavy workloads and lower pay compared to other specialties.^{1 2} This bill would remedy that omission. It is consistent with the goal of the Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award – to retain crucial school-based staff by reducing their student loan burden – and an important acknowledgement of school nurses' contributions.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 545.

¹ Why Are School Nurses Leaving? NEA Today (2023). <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/why-are-school-nurses-leaving>

² State Laws on School Nursing Outline Copious Responsibilities for Nurses. Child Trends (2022).

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/state-laws-on-school-nursing-outline-copious-responsibilities-for-nurses>