



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0718

February 20, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 718 – Maryland Pathway to Nursing Pilot Program and Advisory Committee
- Establishment

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill 718.

SB 718 establishes a pathway to nursing pilot program (the Program) in the Maryland Department of Health and establishes a Pathway to Nursing Advisory Committee to assist the Maryland Secretary of Health with implementing the Program. The bill also requires the Secretary to issue grants to at least two program pilot sites. The Program is an innovative way to address nursing workforce shortages by focusing on the barriers that prevent Marylanders from pursuing careers in nursing.

Maryland hospitals continue to face critical staffing shortages. As of 2022, **more than 25% of hospital registered nurse (RN) positions were vacant in the state.**ⁱ Challenges include high staff turnover and **an insufficient nursing pipeline.** Barriers to nursing education include cost of tuition and lack of support services (such as transportation and childcare), both of which the Program would address via wraparound supports provided to students.ⁱ Another challenge for Maryland is a nursing workforce that does not reflect the diversity of our population.ⁱ The Program directly addresses this by creating a grants program for pilot sites in diverse areas for the Pathway to Nursing program, with the goal of increasing of nurses from diverse communities.

It is imperative that we solve this issue now. By 2035, the state will need 13,800 more registered nurses and 9,200 more licensed practical nurses.ⁱ SB 718 addresses these critical needs by directly tackling the barriers we know are preventing future caregivers from completing their nursing education.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 718.

ⁱ Maryland Hospital Association. (2022). 2022 State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce Report. Retrieved from <https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2022-state-of-maryland-s-health-care-workforce-report.pdf>