

House Bill 354
Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee – Establishment
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 2, 2024
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 354, which would establish the Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program in the Maryland Department of Health. This program aims to address the growing nursing shortage in our state by supporting certified nursing assistants (CNAs) to advance their nursing education to become licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and registered nurses (RNs).

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

The pandemic has led to early retirements, increased workloads, and burnout, making it increasingly difficult to fill LPN and RN positions. The nursing shortage has had a huge impact on the number of applicants for our current nursing vacancies. The lack of qualified candidates leaves our nursing job openings unfilled for months on end. According to the Maryland Health Association (MHA), 1 in every 4 hospital nursing positions and more than 1 in 3 LPN positions are vacant statewide.¹ By 2035, Maryland will need 13,800 more registered nurses and 9,200 more licensed practical nurses.¹ The MHA report also indicates that the supply of nurses in Maryland is growing slower than the demand, highlighting opportunities for those considering nursing as a career.¹

House Bill 354 provides a pathway for expanding Maryland’s nursing workforce by supporting CNAs seeking to advance their careers. Increasing the number of licensed nurses in our state is essential to meet the growing health needs of Marylanders.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 354.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

Citations

1. Maryland Nurse Workforce Projections: 2021-2035 Prepared by GlobalData for the Maryland Hospital Association.; 2022. <https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/maryland-nurse-workforce-projections-globaldata.pdf>