



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2024

House Bill 1053: State Board of Nursing - Executive Director Qualifications - Study
Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 1053.

HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state. HFAM is affiliated with the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which is the largest association in the United States representing long-term and post-acute care providers.

House Bill 1053 requires the Maryland Department of Health to convene a stakeholder workgroup to study the qualifications for the executive director of the State Board of Nursing and submit a report on the workgroup's findings and recommendations to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee on or before December 1, 2024.

We understand that this legislation is being amended to eliminate the study and instead remove the qualification that the executive director of the Board of Nursing must be to be a registered nurse (RN) with a minimum of a master's degree in nursing, effective July 2025. The Board will maintain the authority to appoint an executive director of their choosing.

We believe it is critical that a registered nurse serve as the executive director of the Maryland Board of Nursing. The role of executive director requires a large managerial component and a master's degree could be helpful in running the Board. In the role of executive director of the Maryland Board of Nursing, an RN brings extensive skills, knowledge, experience, and understanding regarding the nursing profession. The executive director must help shape policies to bring change that serves Maryland nurses, as well as those receiving care throughout the State. It is huge value-added for the executive director to be an RN and should be a requirement.

Despite well-intentioned efforts to improve processes at the Maryland Board of Nursing, we have for years – especially since the pandemic – heard from our members regarding challenges when working with the Board. In observing the official proceedings and actions of the Board, and based on conversations and direct professional experience, the Board has often been antiquated in its approach to education, innovation, and being client and constituent focused—such an approach has been a detriment to educating, recruiting, and retaining our critically important healthcare workforce. This is especially true of nursing assistants and geriatric nursing assistants.

We all want a highly functioning, effective State Board of Nursing that is responsive to Maryland's nursing workforce needs, and which expeditiously licenses healthcare professionals following federal and state requirements.

With the staffing crisis we face, losing any healthcare staff due to the dysfunction of the Board, delays in processing times, or testing capacity poses a serious risk to the health and well-being of Marylanders. Nurses and nursing assistants must receive licensure approval promptly and have access to testing capacity so that they may provide healthcare services to Marylanders in need.

For these reasons, and with the above considerations, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 1053.

Submitted by:

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