

House Health and Government Operations Committee
Testimony by
Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director
February 6, 2024

**HB 354 - Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee -
Establishment**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges strongly supports HB 354, which seeks to address a piece of the critical healthcare workforce shortage in the state of Maryland. This legislation would establish the Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program in the Maryland Department of Health to provide support to nursing students, with community colleges hosting the pilot program in at least two geographically diverse areas in the state.

According to an analysis done by the Maryland Hospital Association in 2022, the healthcare workforce is at a critical staffing shortage with more anticipated to leave the workforce due to burnout and other factors made acute during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current RN and LPN supply meets 91% and 69% of statewide demand respectively and are projected to drop to 80% and 44% by 2035." (Maryland Hospital Association, 2022). Community colleges are the state's largest provider of registered nurses in the state through our Associate's in Registered Nursing programs and through pathways and stackable credentials such as the ATB (Associate's to Baccalaureate) programs in nursing.

Maryland's community colleges stand ready to support the state's strategic goals in addressing the workforce shortage and appreciate our inclusion in the pilot program and as advisors to the Maryland pathway to nursing advisory committee.

Community colleges provide access to health care education for underrepresented populations and see it as part of our mission. This legislation would provide financial assistance for students pursuing these admirable career pathways, including wrap around services. These provisions would assist us in providing these opportunities to more students and promote a workforce that better reflects the population it serves. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** vote on **HB 354**.