



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 216 - Health Occupations - Nursing - Loan Repayment, Education, and Sunset
Extension (Building Opportunities for Nurses Act of 2025)
House Health and Government Operations Committee
January 28, 2025**

SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairwoman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 216 if amended to ensure support for the essential work of nursing support staff. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Currently, Maryland is experiencing a severe healthcare workforce shortage that threatens the stability of the workforce and the quality of care for patients. SB 216 seeks to address this by removing certain educational and financial barriers for nurses and nursing students to enter the profession.

While we support what the bill does, it lacks support for nursing support staff who significantly contribute to meeting the overall healthcare needs of our communities; To ensure that we are also removing financial barriers for nursing support staff, we propose the following recommendations as outlined by the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MLARP) workgroup as amendments:

Recommendation 3: Expand the MLARP-NNSS statute to allow individuals employed at for-profit long-term care facilities to be eligible for MLARP-NNSS.

Recommendation 4: Limit MLARP-NNSS eligibility to nurses, dedicating a separate program for paid training opportunities for nursing support staff.

We must invest in nursing support staff; certified nursing assistants, certified medication technicians, certified medicine aides, and geriatric nursing assistants all play a critical role in the successful functioning of our healthcare system. When we invest in their training, development, and ease financial burdens, we are supporting the next generation of healthcare professionals, ultimately contributing to our state's future. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 216 if amended.