



Testimony for SB 216

Health Occupations - Nursing - Loan Repayment, Education, and Sunset Extension

Position: Favorable with AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair Beidle and members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, with 10,000 members in Maryland and Washington, DC. 1199 SEIU urges the committee to support the legislation with the following amendments for SB 216.

1199 SEIU worked with bill sponsors, Senator Beidle et. al, in 2022 to pass SB696 with the intent of removing financial barriers and addressing the healthcare workforce shortage. As members of the MLARP (Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program) workgroup, 1199 SEIU supported these additional statutory change recommendations listed in the [final report](#):

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.

Maryland must ensure there is funding to create a separate program for paid training opportunities for nursing support staff across the care continuum – hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities. There is an urgent need for skilled nursing support staff and by altering the scope of the loan repayment program without these amendments, the state ignores the financial barriers that many aspiring students face.

Removing workforce entry barriers for nursing support staff is critical for meeting the healthcare needs of our community. Nursing support staff include certified nursing assistants, certified medication technicians, certified medicine aide, and geriatric nursing

assistants. By investing in paid training program opportunities for nursing support staff, we are helping to prepare a new generation of healthcare professionals who will play a key role in enhancing the quality of care in Maryland.

We hope to work in partnership with the committee and the Department of Health to ensure we are adequately addressing the dire staffing crisis among nursing support staff in Maryland hospitals and long-term care system with the proposed amendments to SB 216.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones
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