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Sent Via E-Mail & Federal Express

March 29, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 1208 - Health Care Workforce Expansion - Favorable as Amended

Dear Chair Guzzone:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of HB 1208 – Health care Workforce Expansion as amended in the House of Delegates. We believe that HB 1208 is the step in the right direction to help expand the opportunity for individuals to enter the health care workforce at a time that we are facing significant staffing shortages and challenges. We sincerely thank Delegate Kelly for her leadership on this effort and are committed to working with her to continue to improve opportunities for our students.

For nearly 25 years, It Works Learning Center, Inc. (It Works) has been providing Certified Nursing Assistant/Geriatric Nursing Assistant (CNA/GNA) training in Maryland, and unlike many of the smaller programs, we train and place hundreds of graduates into good jobs each year. As a result, we have successfully placed thousands of successful graduates in CNA and GNA positions in health care facilities throughout the state. In most cases, our students enter our program knowing they have a specific job waiting for them upon completion of our course.

It Works is supported by federal, state, and local grants from government agencies, non-profits, philanthropies, and health care providers, specifically hospitals and nursing homes. Based on our high graduation and job placement rates, It Works has become a vital resource for health care employers in Maryland to address their significant CNA/GNA job vacancy rates. We currently have multiple employers that each have over 100 current CNA/GNA vacancies, whose role is that much more vital during this pandemic – truly a health care crisis.

During the pandemic, It Works has been a critical staffing resource to health care providers. We have seen a significant increase in enrollment of students eager to serve as CNA/GNAs in Maryland's acute care and long-term care sectors. As a result, we have educated, trained, and graduated roughly 1,000 new health care professionals since the beginning of the pandemic.

Unfortunately, though we have graduated many new professionals to the field, we continue to have significant challenges that hinder our ability to continue to help Maryland health care providers meet their needs to offset ongoing health care staffing shortages.

We understand that the Board of Nursing (Board) is working through their own challenges associated with the pandemic, short staffing, and effects of the recent cyber-attack; however, these challenges have had a real impact on the ability of our graduates to secure and maintain employment due to licensure processing delays. These delays are associated with the ability to take required examinations and process criminal background checks.

We have appreciated that the Board has met with us and is working collaboratively with us to ensure that we may continue to offer virtual classes in a hybrid manner. We are submitting the proper paperwork to be permitted to do so. We have seen the tremendous success and value that online training offers to people that are interested in the nursing profession.

That being said, we respectfully request that your committee pass the House bill as amended and to resist any efforts to strip components of the bill that training schools support. The amended bill includes two critical amendments that help schools like ours:

- Requires the Board to adopt regulations for the standards for the online provision of all aspects of a nursing assistant training program that meets the requirements established by the Board; and
- Requires the Board to approve the use of a nursing assistant training site within 14 days if the same training site had been previously approved by the Board.

These common sense amendments included in the bill before you help us plan future training programs, offering assurances that we can continue to provide hybrid/online training for our students and utilize sites that have been previously approved for clinical training.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available 24/7 on my mobile at (410) 991-8800 or via email at mort@itworkslearning.com. I look forward to working with you to continue to move these issues forward.

I am sincerely yours,



Morton M. Lapidés
President