



Maryland
Hospital Association

**House Bill 1208-
Health Occupations - Health Care Workforce Expansion**

Position: *Support as Amended in the House*

March 29, 2022

Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 1208.

More than two years have passed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Workforce shortages are at crisis levels with a staggering 25% nurse vacancy rate statewide. Registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants make up 39% of the hospital workforce.¹ According to a 2020 analysis, Maryland's registered nurse (RN) population by capita is in the bottom third of the nation.² In response to this crisis, MHA's Executive Committee established the Task Force on Maryland's Future Health Workforce, which includes hospital clinical and human resource executives. This group will recommend state support to ensure we have the health care workforce necessary to meet the needs of patients now and into the future. HB 1208 incorporates initiatives that task force members identified to build and sustain Maryland's health care workforce.

As amended, HB 1208 would require the Board of Nursing to convene a stakeholder group to explore the implementation of a nurse loan repayment program. Bringing relevant stakeholders together can improve the program through recommendations and add a layer of accountability to grow and support the program.

The House amendments also require the Board to adopt regulations establishing categories of certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and standards for online education delivery. This will support the recent Board-approved acute care CNA curriculum. Hospitals often must retrain CNAs because they do not enter the workforce "skilled" for an acute-care setting. They struggle to keep up with the pace since training programs focus on long-term care. This new acute care CNA pathway can serve as a stepping-stone to attract people to pursue a career in acute care.

HB 1208 is a step in the right direction to bring relief to Maryland's staffing challenges.

For these reasons, we ask for *favorable* report on HB 1208 as amended in the House.

For more information, please contact:

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¹ MHA Workforce Survey – February 2022. Note: Data represents submissions by 49 of 51 Maryland hospitals (Survey Response Rate = 96.1%).

² Becker's Hospital Review. (Feb. 18, 2022). "[RN population per capita, by state](#)"