



Committee: Senate Budget and Taxation

Bill Number: HB 1208 - Health Occupations - Health Care Workforce Expansion

Hearing Date: March 30, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *House Bill 1208 – Health Occupations – Health Care Workforce Expansion*. The bill advances concrete, actionable strategies to address the shortage of nurses and nurse support staff (certified nursing assistants, certified medication technicians, and geriatric nursing assistants).

The nursing shortage crises has reached historic levels. In a letter to Secretary Xavier Becerra of the Department of Health and Human Services in September, the American Nurses Association called for sustained action:

“To address this crisis and to ensure that we have a strong nursing workforce for the future, ANA urges the Administration to declare a national nurse staffing crisis and take immediate steps to develop and implement both short- and long-term solutions.”

With House Bill 1208 and House Bill 625 (Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crises in Maryland) combined, the Maryland General Assembly has the framework to take immediate step and long-term steps to address the crises. House Bill 1208 provides immediate relief by:

- Taking the next step in making the clinical externship program for nursing students into a permanent program through a collaborative workgroup. Externs were utilized during the public health emergency. The bill provides for a consistent regulatory framework to ensure the program can be sustained and meaningful;
- Addresses the shortage of preceptors for nursing students by providing a tax credit. The shortage has become acute during COVID, and nursing educations report that it has

made it more challenging for nursing students to complete their educational requirements;

- Studying if the Maryland Department of Labor’s apprenticeship program may be useful in supporting the expansion of the health care workforce, including professionals, such as community health workers, who are not licensed by a health occupations board;
- Supporting efforts to collect information about the number of nurses and nurse support staff by geographic location and health care setting. This information will support and planning and evaluation efforts.

MNA would like to emphasize support of HB 1208’s approach to establishing a loan repayment program for nurses and nurse support staff. HB 1208 proposes a workgroup to study how a program can be structured in a fair and sustainable manner. MNA expects that the workgroup to find that the loan repayment program should not be sustained through licensure or certification fees.

MNA is in strong support of this legislation. If we can provide any additional information to support the Committee’s work on this critical bill, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ https://www.nursingworld.org/~4a49e2/globalassets/rss-assets/analettertohhs_staffingconcerns_final-2021-09-01.pdf

On page 7 from line 41 through page 8 in line 33, strike “NURSE PRACTITIONER” and replace