

February 17, 2022

Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

As a member of the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants (MLARP) Workgroup established within SB 501 from 2020, I write in support of **SB 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants-Alterations**.

As you know, rural and underserved communities face significant challenges in accessing health care services. In many areas, the supply of health care providers cannot keep up with the demand for services. At UMB School of Medicine we are often contacted by representatives in different regions throughout the state asking for input on how to produce initiatives and creative academic programming to meet the demand for healthcare services.

Incentive programs play an integral role in attracting students to these healthcare professions and incentivizing them to practice in communities where we need them most. Approximately two thirds of the physicians we train at the School of Medicine are leaving the state. According to the 2021 AAMC Physician Workforce Profile survey, Maryland ranks 40th in the nation in terms of the percentage of physicians retained in-State after public undergraduate medical education (21.6% compared to a national state median of 39.7 %).

In 2020, the average debt for an indebted University of Maryland medical student was \$174,912. The Loan Assistance repayment program is a proven effective tool that we can take advantage of to help our up and coming new generation of medical professionals. With enhanced state funding contributions to the program as well as programmatic changes such as making part-time physicians and physician assistants eligible for participation as outlined in SB 626, we can continue to work toward meeting the growing demand of applicants for this program.

SB 626 also establishes the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program Advisory Council so the workgroup can continue to assist the Maryland Department of Health in the administration of the program.

Thank you for your consideration and support of SB 626.

Sincerely,



Donna L. Parker, M.D.
Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education
Professor, Department of Medicine
University of Maryland School of Medicine

