

# **SB626 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program**

Uploaded by: Dakota Matthews

Position: FAV



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Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

John Hartline, Chair

Testimony in Support of  
Senate Bill 626 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician  
Assistants – Alterations  
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
February 17, 2022

**The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 626 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants – Alterations.** This bill will clarify that part-time physicians and physician assistants are eligible for the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants (MLARP). MLARP is currently available to physicians, physician assistants, and medical residents in their last year of residency that are working in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area, Medically Underserved Area/Population (MUA/P), or in one of the States 18 rural counties. By clarifying that part time physicians and physician assistants are eligible, it will increase the number of healthcare workers in the areas they are needed most.

Rural Marylanders are often in worse health than that of their urban and suburban counterparts, and lack access to medical facilities and practitioners, especially specialty care. By allowing part time physicians and physician assistants to qualify for MLARP, it will encourage more physicians and physician assistants to work in the rural and other underserved areas of the State. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reports that more than 1.1 million Marylanders are in a primary care Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). That’s over 1.1 million Marylanders that lack access to the primary health care they need. In the U.S, rural or partially rural areas make up over 68% of the designated primary care HPSAs.

It is important that the shortages of healthcare workers be addressed now before further complications arise. The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ *Occupational Outlook Handbook* reports that the need for physician assistants will increase by 31% between 2020 and 2030, and there will be about 12,200 openings annually. The need for health care services will increase due to the healthcare services needed to provide for an aging population and an increase in patients with chronic disease. Rural areas are already experiencing an aging population and less retention of younger workers to provide an appropriate workforce. In addition to having worse health conditions and access to medical care, this could lead the current issues being faced by rural communities to be exacerbated in the future.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 626.

*The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.*

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”

# **SB626 Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program f**

Uploaded by: E. Albert Reece

Position: FAV

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



# **SB 626- Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program**

Uploaded by: Erin Dorrien

Position: FAV



Maryland  
Hospital Association

## Senate Bill 626 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants - Alterations

**Position: Support**

February 17, 2022

Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

### MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 626.

The Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants (MLARP) is a powerful tool to retain and recruit primary care professionals—expanding access to care in underserved and rural areas. In exchange for loan repayment, physicians and physician assistants commit to practice in health professional shortage areas and/or areas identified by the state for at least two years. During the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly expanded this program by passing [SB 501](#), which invested at least \$1 million in funding over the past three fiscal years—allowing the maximum federal match.

The legislation also established a [stakeholder work group](#) staffed by the Office of Population Health Improvement. The group released a [final report](#) with recommendations to diversify the program's funding to include a permanent general fund appropriation and supplemental non-general funds. SB 626 codifies many of the work group recommendations, including expanding eligibility to include physicians and physician assistants working part time and to establish a permanent advisory council to ensure the program's stability and guide its expansion.

Investment in this program increases access to care. Physicians and physician assistants with fiscal year 2022 obligations provided more than 60,000 hours of service this year—more than 48,000 direct patient care hours. These caregivers served approximately 94,250 patients in Maryland.<sup>1</sup> MHA applauds the continued support for the program in the FY 2023 budget proposal.

We ask the state to invest in our health care workforce, which is facing historic staffing shortages. By doing so, we also invest in the health of all Marylanders.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on SB 626.

For more information, please contact:  
Erin Dorrien, Vice President, Policy  
[Edorrien@mhaonline.org](mailto:Edorrien@mhaonline.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Loan Assistant Repayment Program (MLARP) for Physicians and Physician Assistants Workgroup. (Nov. 12, 2021). [Minutes](#).

# Attract and Keep Physicians in Maryland

Preserve gains made to Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program



**Maryland is a top exporter of physicians**

Nearly 60% of Md. medical school graduates leave to practice out-of-state

Reverting to \$400K in FY2023 state appropriation

**could reduce manpower by 60%** and will leave federal funds on the table



**FY22 Awards:**

**88 physicians and physician assistants in first or second year participating in LARP**

- 60K hours of service
- 48K direct patient care hours
- Must practice in rural and underserved areas
- Care for more than 94K Marylanders

**84%** of LARP recipients practice in state beyond required 2 years



## How you can help:

Ensure Maryland's underserved communities can attract and retain physicians and physician assistants. Support Gov. Hogan's \$1.4 million budget proposal for the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program to maximize federal matching dollars.

**SB626\_NDMU\_Fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Greg FitzGerald

Position: FAV





NOTRE DAME  
OF MARYLAND  
UNIVERSITY

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
***SB626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians***  
***and Physician Assistants – Alterations***  
***February 17, 2022***  
**Favorable**

On behalf of Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support** of [SB 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants – Alterations](#). The bill expands the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants ([MLARP](#)) to include part-time physicians and physician assistants. NDMU is developing a Master of Science in Physician Assistant and is pursuing ARC-PA accreditation.

The State of Maryland is currently experiencing a workforce shortage of primary care providers, including physician assistants (PAs). According to the Maryland Department of Labor, the demand for physician assistants will increase 40% from 3,126 in 2018 to 4,362 in 2028. Nationally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a workforce demand increase of 31% from 2019 to 2029.

NDMU believes that by including part-time employed physicians and PAs in the MLARP program, patients will be the primary benefactors. Across the industry, there is an ever-increasing population of PAs and physicians who intentionally seek part-time work. The bill if enacted would have the likely effect of incentivizing part-time primary care and specialty care practitioners to locate in health professional shortage areas and medically underserved areas. Studies have shown care from a part-time primary care practitioner results in patient satisfaction being maintained or improved.<sup>12</sup> This incentive could serve an important State goal of expanding access to essential healthcare services for those most in need. Loan assistance repayment programs also serve as an important retention tool for high quality physicians and PAs in the State of Maryland.

In addition to providing direct benefits for in-need patients and practitioners, loan assistance repayment programs more broadly expand access for students to enter into in-demand professions that require extensive graduate level education. NDMU and other higher education institutions highlight such programs for prospective students as a potential means to help finance their education. Eliminating loan debt for full-time and part-time physicians and PAs may also incentivize practitioners to give-back more of their time and expertise to formally educating their

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<sup>1</sup> Panattoni, Stone, A., Chung, S., & Tai-Seale, M. (2014). Patients Report Better Satisfaction with Part-Time Primary Care Physicians, Despite Less Continuity of Care and Access. *Journal of General Internal Medicine : JGIM*, 30(3), 327–333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-014-3104-6>.

<sup>2</sup> Bodenheimer, Haq, C., & Lehmann, W. (2018). Continuity and Access in the Era of Part-Time Practice. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 16(4), 359–. <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2267>

future peers. NDMU believes that enfranchising physicians and PAs who are or will be employed part-time in the tuition repayment assistance program, as put forward in SB 626, will foster good will and deliver a financial incentive to the healthcare providers who staff the front lines of healthcare delivery in the State of Maryland.

**Contact:**

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**7a - SB 626 - EHEA - BOP - LOS.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Heather Shek

Position: FAV



# Board of Physicians

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Damean W.E. Freas, D.O., Chair

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## 2022 SESSION POSITION PAPER

**BILL NO.:** SB 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants - Alterations  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
**POSITION:** Support

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**TITLE:** Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants – Alterations

### **POSITION & RATIONALE:**

The Maryland Board of Physicians (the Board) is submitting this Letter of Support for Senate Bill (SB) 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants – Alterations.

Senate Bill 501 (2020) established the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants (MLARP) Workgroup, which was tasked with making findings and recommendations for the improvement and expansion of MLARP, including recommendations on the structure of a permanent advisory council and a permanent funding structure for MLARP. These recommendations were submitted to the General Assembly in December 2021 in a final workgroup report.

During the MLARP Workgroup, members were given presentations by representatives of other state support-for-service programs. Dr. Robert Sewell, architect of Alaska’s incredibly successful loan repayment program, began his presentation with an important reminder: this program is about access to healthcare, not about loan repayment. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, national trends, including a growing and aging general population, rising education debt for clinicians and difficulty with recruitment and retention for hospitals in underserved communities, have all served to exacerbate health care disparities in Maryland and across the nation.

Support-for-service programs such as MLARP are important components in Maryland’s strategy to narrow gaps in health care coverage. MLARP creates both an incentive for health care practitioners to work in traditionally underserved communities and a network to connect these practitioners to the areas where they are needed the most. In fiscal year 2022, MLARP awarded approximately 30 grants to practitioners. While this number may seem modest, this potentially represents tens of thousands of patient encounters annually, all in areas experiencing significant shortages of health professionals.

For decades, MLARP has been solely funded at the state level by contributions made by the Board. The Board has contributed more than \$11 million to MLARP since 1997, and over the past two years alone, almost 10% of its annual revenue went toward the program. However, for the program to expand, more diverse funding sources are necessary. The MLARP Workgroup reviewed the most successful loan repayment programs across the country, and a key commonality was that all of them relied on multiple funding sources, including state funds, private contributions and employer matches.

The Board supports all ten recommendations made by the MLARP Workgroup and detailed in its final report. SB 626 would take steps toward implementing some of these recommendations by expanding the program to include part-time practitioners and establishing a permanent advisory council to monitor the program and seek permanent and diverse revenue sources. It is an important step toward expanding an essential program, and the Board urges a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Matthew Dudzic, Health Policy Analyst, Maryland Board of Physicians, 410-764-5042.

Sincerely,



Damean W. E. Freas, D.O.  
Chair, Maryland Board of Physicians

**The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Maryland Department of Health or the Administration.**

**SB 626\_MdAPA\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Stierhoff

Position: FAV

John R. Stierhoff  
(410) 244-7833  
jrstierhoff@venable.com

February 17, 2022

The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky  
Chair, Senate Education, Health &  
Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Senate Miller Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and  
Physical Assistants – Alterations  
Support

Dear Chair Pinsky:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants (MdAPA), the organization that represents the more than 3,000 practicing PAs in the state. We were honored to be part of the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MLARP) work group.

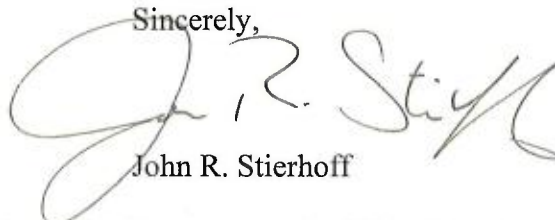
During the 2021 Session, we supported changes to this program which provides loan repayment options for physicians and PAs in underserved areas.

MdAPA fully endorses the recommendations of the workgroup.

Never has the need for qualified health providers been so apparent. The pandemic only further exposed the gaps we have in providing high-level care to all Marylanders, especially those in rural and underserved areas. Without an increased and reliable source of funding, we remain at a competitive disadvantage to those states with more robust programs, not to mention we are potentially leaving matching federal dollars on the table.

Thank you for your support of Senate Bill 626 and this effort to further expand and strengthen this program.

Sincerely,



John R. Stierhoff

cc: Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

**7b - SB 626 - EHEA - MHCC - LOS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maryland Department of Health /Office of Governmen Bennardi

Position: FAV



**2022 SESSION**  
**POSITION PAPER**

**BILL NO: SB 626**

**COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**POSITION: Support**

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**TITLE: SB 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physicians Assistants – Alterations**

**BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Bill 626 (SB 626) clarifies eligibility to participate in the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program. The bill authorizes the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish prorated loan replacement assistance for participants. SB 626 also establishes the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program Advisory Council (the Council) for Physicians and Physician Assistants, which will assist MDH in the administration and oversight of the program. The Council will be required to report all activities and recommendations produced by the Council to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before October 1 of each year.

**POSITION AND RATIONALE**

The Maryland Health Care Commission supports SB 626.

The Association of American Medical Colleges projects a national physician shortfall of between 37,800-124,000 physicians by 2034 for both primary care (family medicine, general pediatrics, and geriatric medicine) and specialty care (surgical specialties (e.g. general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, and orthopedic surgery), medical specialties (e.g. cardiology, oncology, infectious diseases, and pulmonology), and other specialties (e.g. anesthesiology, neurology, emergency medicine, and addiction medicine).<sup>1</sup> Similar trends are seen in Maryland as the population of older adults and insured individuals continues to increase. To meet current demands for primary care, Maryland will need to increase the number of physicians by more than 1,052 primary care physicians by 2030.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *AAMC Report Reinforces Mounting Physician Shortage*. AAMC. June 2021. Available at: <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/aamc-report-reinforces-mounting-physician-shortage> <sup>2</sup> *Maryland: Projecting Primary Care Physician Workforce*. Robert Graham Center. September 2013. Available at: <https://www.graham-center.org/content/dam/rgc/documents/maps-data-tools/state-collections/workforce-projections/Maryland.pdf>

The Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants (MLARP) fund was authorized under Health-General §24-1707, and aims to improve recruitment and retention of healthcare providers, particularly in rural and underserved communities in Maryland.<sup>3</sup> The program is also advantageous for relieving medical school debt. According to recent research, the median debt burden for medical school graduates was \$190,000.<sup>4</sup> The MLARP offers physicians, physician assistants, and medical residents in their last year of residency up to \$100,000 for a two-year service commitment.

SB 626 clarifies eligibility for the MLARP to include part-time physicians and part-time physician assistants. Allowing providers who work part-time to participate in the program broadens the reach of the tax credit, which will incentivize more providers to practice in under-resourced communities. The bill also authorizes MDH to establish prorated loan replacement assistance for participants. Proration allows unspent portions of the loan to remain in the fund maintained by MDH for future administration of the program.

SB 626 establishes the MLARP Advisory Council for Physicians and Physician Assistants. Several workgroups have been convened to oversee and monitor MLARP, however there is an opportunity to create a council dedicated to the administration of the program. The Council proposed in the bill will consist of senior leaders from regulatory commissions, hospital associations, medical schools, medical academies, and State boards. The Council will be mandated to have regular oversight over the program. The MLARP is currently funded by MDH, but the Council will seek alternate funding sources that will ensure longevity of the program. The Council will increase awareness of the program in educational institutions and other organizations, and will make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

For these reasons, the Commission asks for a favorable report on SB 626.

*Note: The Maryland Health Care Commission is an independent State agency, and the position of the Commission may differ from the position of the Maryland Department of Health.*

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Loan Repayment Programs. Maryland.gov. Available at: <https://health.maryland.gov/pophealth/Pages/State-Loan-Repayment-Program.aspx> <sup>4</sup> Manage medical student loans. American Medical Association. Available at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/residents-students/career-planning-resource/manage-medical-student-loans>

**Sen.Griffith\_SB626\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Melony Griffith

Position: FAV

MELONY G. GRIFFITH  
*Legislative District 25*  
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Budget and Taxation Committee



James Senate Office Building  
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Melony.Griffith@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Melony G. Griffith in Support of Senate Bill 626**  
**Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants -**  
**Alterations**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**Thursday, February 17, 2022**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagen, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am pleased to present Senate Bill 626. The need for this bill has been exemplified by the Covid-19 pandemic which has amplified the health disparities that continue to be poignant throughout our state. At the forefront of these challenges are our healthcare providers and this includes the unfortunate workforce shortages that have continued to impact our healthcare system.

I was honored to introduce a bill in 2020 year that passed unanimously out of this Committee and the Chamber. The bill established the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MLARP) for Physicians and Physicians Assistants – Administration and Funding Workgroup, and assigned the workgroup to consult with the Department of Legislative Services to study, report on, and make recommendations for the improvement of the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants.

Senate Bill 626 is an interim recommendation from the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MLARP) for Physicians and Physicians Assistants – Administration and Funding Workgroup's final report. Following the recommendations from the Workgroup Report, this bill will make part-time physicians and physician assistants eligible for pro-rated loan repayment benefits, establish a permanent LARP Advisory Council, and join the Practice Sights Retention Collaborative & Data Management System.

**Senate Bill 626 will:**

- **Make** part-time physicians and physician assistants eligible for pro-rated loan repayment benefits.
- **Establish** a permanent LARP Advisory Council to seek permanent and diverse revenue sources to aid in the stability and further development of the Program; help ensure maximum use of federal funds; utilize available data and information to help direct funding to priority area; monitor similar loan programs in other states and ensure that the

MELONY G. GRIFFITH  
*Legislative District 25*  
Prince George's County

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PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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Budget and Taxation Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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Program remains competitive; assist the Department in the administration of the Program; help market and raise awareness of the Program through educational institutions and other appropriate entities as an incentive to health care providers to practice in underserved areas; and make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor on any necessary changes to the Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 626, I respectfully request a favorable report.

# **SB 626 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Progra**

Uploaded by: Pegeen A. Townsend

Position: FAV



**Pegeen A. Townsend**  
Vice President, Government Affairs  
9 State Circle, Suite 303  
Annapolis MD 21401  
410-292-8824 CELL

## **SB 626 – Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants - Alterations**

**Position: *Support***

February 17, 2022

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

### **Bill Summary**

SB 626 would create a Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program Advisory Council for Physicians and Physician Assistants in the Department. The Advisory Council is charged with seeking permanent and diverse revenue sources to aid in the stability and further development of the program and assist the Department in the administration of the program. The legislation clarifies that part-time physicians and physician assistants are also eligible to participate in the program.

### **MedStar Health's Position**

Health care workforce shortages are expected to grow as the Maryland population ages, health care practitioners retire, and the number of graduating medical students and residents do not keep pace. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects there will be a national primary care physician shortage of between 21,000 and 77,100 physicians by 2034. As of September 30, 2021, there are a total of 48 primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) in Maryland, inclusive of 887,614 Maryland residents. Maryland is also a top exporter of physicians with nearly 60 percent of Maryland medical school graduates leaving to practice out-of-state.

Tuition costs for higher education have increased over recent years, with annual growth exceeding monetary inflation by more than two and a half times. Students must also account for costs related to mandatory fees, health and malpractice insurance, vaccinations, uniforms, books, transportation, and living expenses. For the 2019-2020 academic year, the cost of attendance at the University of Maryland School of Medicine was \$79,141 for Maryland residents and \$110,723 for out-of-state attendees.

A wide variety of tactics are currently utilized within the state to help meet the health care workforce needs of Marylanders, including the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants. The Program serves to incentivize qualifying physicians and physician assistants to practice in underserved areas in exchange for education loan repayment. Generally, in exchange for a two-year service obligation in an underserved area of the state, physicians and physician assistants are eligible for up to a total of \$100,000 in education loan repayments if selected for participation in the program.

A strong health care workforce is an absolute necessity to providing optimal health care access to all Marylanders. A program of educational loan repayment for health care providers is an effective tool for health care workforce development.

For the reasons listed above, we respectfully ask that you give SB 626 a ***favorable*** report.

**SB 626 MLARP\_Physician Ass FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Fidler

Position: FAV





Maryland Independent College  
and University Association

## Written Support

### Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

#### *Senate Bill 626 (Griffith) Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants - Alterations*

Sara C. Fidler, President

[sfidler@micua.org](mailto:sfidler@micua.org)

February 17, 2022

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 58,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of *Senate Bill 626 (Griffith) Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants - Alterations*. This legislation expands the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MLARP) for Physicians and Physician Assistants to include part-time physicians and physician assistants.

Senate Bill 626 authorizes the Maryland Department of Health to establish pro-rated loan repayment amounts for eligible part-time physicians or physician assistants. The addition of this group within MLARP is timely given the current global public health crisis due to COVID-19. The inclusion of part-time work allows more flexibility in an evolving employment structure. This bill will ensure that as many physicians and physician assistants as possible will be able to apply for, and benefit from, MLARP. By increasing financial support for these healthcare professionals, the State is improving access to pursue graduate-level education in the healthcare industry operating at a deficit.

One of the MICUA member institutions, Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), is dedicated to preparing Physician Assistants through a new and developing Master of Science program. NDMU is in the process of attaining ARC-PA accreditation for the program. Over the past two years, NDMU has witnessed historic retirements and a loss of health care professions because of the current public health emergency and thus identified a need to train a new cohort of physician assistants to meet this demand. As referenced in NDMU's testimony, the university supports the passage of SB 626 to further attract individuals to the health profession and serve the needs of the State.

If you would like further information or have any questions or concerns, please contact Irnande Altema, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, [ialtema@micua.org](mailto:ialtema@micua.org).

***For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report for Senate Bill 626.***

**SB0626\_FAV\_MedChi, MDACEP, MDAFP, MACHC\_LARP - Alt**

Uploaded by: Steve Wise

Position: FAV



*The Maryland State Medical Society*  
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Maryland Chapter  
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS



MARYLAND ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Melony Griffith

FROM: J. Steven Wise  
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
Danna L. Kauffman  
Christine K. Krone

DATE: February 17, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 626 – *Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants – Alterations*

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On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, the Maryland Academy of Family Physicians, and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 626.

Senate Bill 626 implements two recommendations from the Workgroup on the Maryland Loan Assistance and Repayment Program (MLARP) for Physicians and Physician Assistants, which provides loan repayment aid to eligible physicians and physician assistants (PAs) who work in underserved areas of the State for 2 years. The Workgroup was created by Senate Bill 501 of 2020 and was tasked with examining ways to improve MLARP. The Workgroup issued its Final Report in December of 2021, which included numerous recommendations, some of which related to funding, some that can be implemented without statutory change, and the two recommendations addressed by Senate Bill 626.

The first change is making the statute clear that part-time physicians and PAs are eligible for pro-rated loan assistance. The hours spent caring for patients by part-time providers are no less important than those spent by full-time providers, so it is appropriate that part-time providers be made eligible for MLARP.

Second, the bill establishes a permanent Advisory Council which is comprised of the same stakeholders involved in the Workgroup. The Advisory Council's purpose is set forth as well, which includes guiding MLARP so that it maximizes the funds available to the program and remains competitive with other states' loan assistance programs.

MLARP is a powerful tool at the State's disposal to ensure patient access to physicians in every part of Maryland, and we ask that the Committee adopt Senate Bill 626 to implement these needed changes.

**For more information call:**

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