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In Senior Care and Services*

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

DATE: February 24, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 518 – *Career Pathways for Health Care Workers Program*

On behalf of the LifeSpan Network, the largest and most diverse senior care provider association in Maryland representing nursing facilities, assisted living providers, continuing care retirement communities, medical adult day care centers, senior housing communities and other home and community-based services, we **support** Senate Bill 518. This bill establishes the Career Pathways for Health Care Workers Program in the Maryland Department of Labor for the purpose of providing grants to eligible employers for training programs attended by health care workers in hospitals and nursing homes.

Prior to the declaration of the catastrophic public health emergency, Maryland was facing a workforce crisis due to several factors. Maryland's 60+ population is anticipated to increase from 1.2 million to 1.7 million by 2030, a 40% increase. This demographic shift impacts Maryland's post-acute care settings in two ways. First, the increasing senior population increases the need for services, which then increases the need for direct care workers. Second, the increasing senior population will have a negative effect on the availability of direct care workers, given that the primary labor pool for direct care workers are women aged 25-64, whose demographic is growing at less than one percent. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, with more employees leaving the workforce because of childcare and health concerns or to go into other non-health care fields.

Senate Bill 518 provides another method to bolster the health care workforce, targeting hospitals and nursing homes, two venues that suffered from significant worker shortages over the last two years. Nursing homes often provide training for their workers and Senate Bill 518 will provide an additional incentive to continue to do so with the opportunity to receive matching grants. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on Senate Bill 518.

For more information call:

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