



**2022 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 407 – Health Occupations – Health Care Staffing Shortage Emergency – Declaration and Licensing and Practice Requirements (Health Care Heroes Act of 2022)

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support With Amendments

BILL ANALYSIS: SB 407 would authorize Secretary of Health to declare a health care staffing shortage emergency in Maryland; allow health occupations boards that regulate categories of health care practitioners included in the identified staffing shortage, to implement expedited licensing process when there is such an emergency declaration; and require each affected board to establish processes for issuance of an initial health occupations license, temporary health occupation license, and a temporary practice letter on an expedited basis during said emergency.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports SB 407 but requests amendment to include local public health departments (LHDs) so they can benefit from the expedited processes related to board certified professionals for those in LHD programs affected by an emergency declaration as described.

Proposed Amendment:

Section “A”, add “Local Health Department” as an eligible “Health Care Facility.”

LHDs provide a wide variety of services that require nurses and other regulated health care practitioners. Before the pandemic, some programs were already experiencing staffing shortages. The COVID-19 response has only exacerbated and increased staffing shortages in those programs and others requiring licensed or certified professionals.

In addition to the sectors mentioned in the bill, staffing shortages in Maryland and US also impact LHDs and their ability to recruit and retain eligible staff. By adding LHDs to this bill, they will be able to obtain nurses and other health care practitioners in a timelier manner during such a declared emergency.

Throughout the pandemic, LHDs have provided their normal services (i.e., scheduled immunizations, dental services, STI testing) while also responding to COVID. LHDs increased staffing for contact tracing, testing, and vaccination efforts and to quickly stand-up large-scale testing sites and mass vaccination sites. But they continue to find it difficult to find trained and qualified health care professionals to support the work.

MACHO supports SB 407 but asks that it does not exclude LHDS as they suffer from the same staffing shortages as in other sectors. They provide key lead and support roles in providing COVID-19 response and services for which they need licensed and trained health care professionals to help carry out.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of support, with amendment, for SB 407. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

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