



Testimony – HB 975

MD Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Nurses and Nursing Workers Act Position: Favorable

Good afternoon to the Chair and members of the committee. My name is Sonia Blair, and I am an Environmental Services Worker at University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center. I am writing this testimony to express my support in favor of the passage of HB 975 – the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Nurses and Nursing Workers.

I am not a nurse, however, my role at the hospital is extremely important to nurses and nursing workers. While I do not directly care for patients, everyone in the hospitals relies on myself and my fellow EVS workers to do our jobs at the highest level to ensure cleanliness, especially while battling the deadly Covid-19 virus, and I take that responsibility very seriously.

I did not take out loans to go to school and I have not gone through the programs and certification classes necessary to become a nurse, but I would like the opportunity to do so. College is expensive. If you go to school and finish, and work in a hospital or healthcare facility when you are done, I do not feel like you should be required to pay back any loans taken out. If you pay your taxes, and you are providing a service to the state as a nursing worker, then I believe it is only fair that your loans are paid for you.

Paying back loans puts such a burden on so many of us in the healthcare fields. We are not making a lot of money. I have colleagues who are constantly working overtime just to keep up with loan payments. After paying your house note, insurance, putting food on the table for your family, it's difficult not to fall behind. Once that happens, you are now in more debt and your credit is damaged which has a lasting effect on your financial future. It is a struggle to make it all work. If you lose your job, then you have that added stress of knowing this loan is looming over your head on top of everything else.

It is difficult to even qualify for loans if you are working and making a certain amount of money. There should be an opportunity for workers like myself to be able to access

funds to go to school in advance of taking out loans and having them reimbursed. It is great that this bill prioritizes areas and medical specialties that have been identified as experiencing shortages. There are shortages everywhere right now, but I am hopeful this bill will help change that and workers like me get the opportunity to utilize this fund. It is for this reason this legislation is so necessary, and I why am in support of the passage of HB 975.

Respectfully,

Sonia Blair
Environmental Services Worker