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Operations Committee

Subcommittees

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and Long Term Care

Insurance and Pharmaceuticals

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Health Occupations - Health Care Workforce Expansion- HB 1208
March 3rd, 2022

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee

Thank you for allowing me to present HB 1208, Health Care Workforce Expansion which represents another piece of our efforts to address healthcare workforce issues in Maryland.

We've previously heard from the Maryland Hospital Association that nursing vacancies have increased 50% over the last six months. Our nursing workforce issues have been further impacted by the licensing and testing delays caused by the cyberattack on the Department of Health.

There are non-legislative efforts underway to alleviate this shortage: our nursing schools are adding slots to accommodate more students, graduating students early so they can begin work more quickly and recruiting additional faculty; Howard County Community College is establishing an apprenticeship model for learning; and hospitals are offering increased schedule flexibility, higher wages, and signing bonuses to attract and retain nursing staff. But significant challenges remain for the industry. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics expects an additional 500,000 nurses will quit this year, leaving us with a nationwide shortage of more than 1.1 million nurses.

At the suggestion of the Vice Chair, over the interim, I met with stakeholders to discuss this challenge and a few of the ideas stemming from our discussions are reflected in the various provisions of HB 1208:

1. **Enhancing clinical experience and boosting workforce** - During the pandemic, the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) ran a clinical externship program which placed 1400 nursing students and 100 respiratory therapy students in clinical externship positions at hospitals and facilities around the state. A waiver issued during the crisis allowed students who had completed certain course work, but not yet completed required testing, to work under supervision of a licensed professional and the program was a huge success, particularly in our rural areas. HB 1208 would continue this program and place it under the supervision of the Board of Nursing instead of MIEMSS.
2. **Expanding Number of Nurse Preceptors** - One of the challenges discussed during stakeholder meetings is the shortage of nurses willing to serve as preceptors which makes it difficult to find clinical placements for nursing students. In 2016 to address a similar problem with physician training, we established a tax credit against state income taxes for physicians and physician assistants who serve as preceptors. To incentivize more nurses to serve as preceptors, HB 1208 expands the program to offer tax credits for licensed practical nurses, nurse practitioners, and registered nurses.
3. **Creating a transition pathway for Temporary Nurse Aides** - When visiting restrictions were in place during the pandemic, many long term care facilities hired patients' family members as temporary nursing aides (TNA). This had the dual benefit of allowing family members to see their loved ones and assisted the facilities in meeting their workforce needs. More than 3100 of these individuals have taken the eight hour course to become employed as a TNA and approximately 2000 remain employed in our long term care facilities. However, once pandemic related licensing waivers expire, this workforce will need to transition to become certified nursing aides and HB 1208 authorizes the Board of Nursing to apply their on the job experience towards the training hours required to become an CNA.
4. **Creating a marketing plan and resource website** - HB 1208 requires the Board of Nursing to create and implement a marketing plan to attract individuals to the field of nursing and also create and host on its website, a resource for potential nurses to find information on pathways to licensure or certification. The website will also include information on financing options to pay for nursing education and a list of accredited schools and training programs.
5. **Studying apprenticeship model for healthcare workforce** – The legislation will convene a workgroup to study expansion of the state apprentice programs to the healthcare workforce and to make recommendations on the fields that could be served by

such programs, along with potential options to provide incentives for experienced practitioners to work with apprentices.

Additional challenges were identified in our discussions but are not addressed in this bill. It is my intention to convene a group of stakeholders over the interim to discuss solutions for the shortage of clinical rotation placements and how to attract teaching faculty into our nurse education programs. Further, the ongoing challenges at the Board of Nursing will be considered during a sunset review to be conducted this summer,

There are amendments suggested by the Board of Nursing and the Maryland Nurses Association. I look forward to working together with them to get this bill just right in subcommittee.

I urge a favorable report.