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Budget and Taxation Committee



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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
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Madam Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

I am pleased to present Senate Bill 626, cross-file to House Bill 1464, which was unanimously voted favorable by this committee. SB626 unanimously passed the Senate. 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

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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.