



**Testimony of Ricarra Jones, Political Director of 1199SEIU on
SB 696 Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment for Nurses and Nursing Workers –
Program Establishment and Funding Act**

Position: FAVORABLE

March 29, 2022

Dear Chair, Shane E. Pendergrass and Members of the Health, and Government Operations Committee:

1199SEIU Healthcare Workers East is the largest healthcare union in the country with, with over 450,000 members throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida and Washington, D.C. **We fully support SB 696.**

SB 696 would positively impact many Marylanders by easing the educational loan burden for nurses and nursing workers who work in medically underserved areas.

SB 696 would provide educational loan repayment assistance to nurses and nursing workers who provide certain primary care services to those Marylanders living in areas which are designated as medically underserved.

Further, SB 696 also allows the Department of Health, if funding is available, to provide loan assistance to a nurse or nursing worker who practices a medical specialty that has been identified as being in shortage in the geographic area where the nurse or nursing worker practices that specialty, and does so for a certain period of time. This provision of the bill allows the Department to be responsive to changing needs in Maryland communities.

We need more nurses and nursing workers in Maryland. But, and especially in today's economy, the prospect of taking out educational loans is a substantial barrier for many people who would like to begin or further their careers in these rewarding fields.

Reducing the overwhelming burden of educational loans will make it possible for more students, nurses, and nursing workers to start, continue, or complete their education knowing they will receive financial assistance.

Marylanders most in need of expanded access to medical services will also benefit from an influx of new nurses and nursing workers in their communities.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT SB 696** and ask for a **FAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones
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