



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**House Bill 1208-  
Health Occupations - Health Care Workforce Expansion**

**Position: Support**

March 3, 2022

House Health & Government Operations Committee

**MHA Position**

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 1208.

More than 700 days have passed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, Maryland faces a staggering health care workforce crisis, with a 50% jump in hospital nurse vacancies the last five months of 2021. Registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants make up 39% of the hospital workforce.<sup>1</sup> According to a 2020 analysis, Maryland's registered nurse (RN) population by capita is in the bottom third of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

In response to this crisis, MHA's Executive Committee established the Task Force on the Future of Maryland's Health Care Workforce, which includes hospital clinical and human resource executives. This group will recommend state support to ensure we have the health care workforce necessary to meet the needs of patients now and into the future. HB 1208 incorporates initiatives that task force members identified as supportive of building and sustaining Maryland's health care workforce.

Specifically, HB 1208 would require the Board of Nursing to create a marketing plan to promote careers in nursing. Additionally, the bill would codify the nurse extern program. Under the Governor's executive orders during the public health emergency, some nursing students were able to work in supportive roles. The students are still supervised at work, so they learn as they earn. This is a win-win for the health care system and nursing students.

The bill also creates a tax credit for licensed practical nurse and registered nurse preceptors. A lack of faculty and clinical preceptors contributed to the more than 80,000 qualified applicants nationwide denied admission to baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2019.<sup>3</sup> The tax credit is another tool to encourage more nurses to become preceptors.

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<sup>1</sup> MHA Workforce Survey – February 2022. *Note: Data represents submissions by 49 of 51 Maryland hospitals (Survey Response Rate = 96.1%).*

<sup>2</sup> Becker's Hospital Review. (Feb. 18, 2022). "[RN population per capita, by state](#)"

<sup>3</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2019). *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2018-2019*. Washington, DC.

Everyone has a role to play in supporting our health care workforce. HB 1208 takes a step in the right direction to help bring relief to Maryland's health care staffing challenges.

For these reasons, we ask for *favorable* report on HB 1208.

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