



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

March 29, 2022

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 696 – Maryland Loan Repayment Program for Nurses and Nursing Workers – Program Establishment and Funding – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of information for Senate Bill (SB) 696 - Maryland Loan Repayment Program for Nurses and Nursing Workers - Program Establishment and Funding.

SB 696 establishes the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MLARP) Fund for Nurses and Nursing Workers to assist certain nurses and nursing workers with the repayment of certain education loans, requires the Comptroller to distribute \$400,000 from fees collected by the State Board of Nursing for certain program grants, and creates a workgroup to examine the implementation of the MLARP for nurses and nursing workers and make recommendations to increase the nursing workforce in the state.

While MDH recognizes the extreme staffing shortage of nurses and related professions within the state and appreciates the intent of the workgroup created by SB 696, it should be noted there are several other bills aimed at studying this issue. Specifically, SB 626 (Maryland Loan Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistant-Alteration), SB 440 (Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland–Establishment), and HB 97 (Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals) all create workgroups to study various aspects of the healthcare workforce shortage in the state.

Additionally, HB 1208 (Health Occupations – Health Care Workforce Expansion) establishes two more workgroups – a Stakeholder Workgroup to examine the expansion of the state apprenticeship programs to the healthcare workforce and a Workgroup to study the establishment of a loan repayment program for nurses and other health practitioners regulated by the Maryland Board of Nursing that is very similar, but not exact, to the Workgroup proposed in SB 696. It includes an overlap of Workgroup members, health professions to be studied, and research

topics. It would likely be more efficient to combine the various healthcare workforce shortage studies into one singular workgroup.

Lastly, as SB 696 creates a new program within MDH and requires MDH to staff the workgroup, there will be operational and fiscal impacts totaling approximately \$1.3 million over five years.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Heather Shek, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs at 410-260-3190 or heather.shek@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Dennis R. Schrader
Secretary