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Sykesville, MD 21784

TO: Health and Government Operations
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: Senate Bill 440, Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland - Establishment
DATE: March 24, 2022
POSITION: **Favorable**

LeadingAge Maryland supports with amendment Senate Bill 440, Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland - Establishment

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 135 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Our mission is to expand the world of possibilities for aging in Maryland. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland.

This bill establishes the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland to examine areas related to health care workforce shortages in the State, including the extent of the workforce shortage, short-term solutions to the workforce shortage, future health care workforce needs, and the relationship between the Maryland Department of Health and the health occupations boards. The Commission must report its findings and recommendations to committees of the General Assembly by December 31 each year.

Skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers, assisted living campuses, and support professional are battling COVID-19 with fewer staff particularly in long-term care. As a result, our facilities have beds available to provide quality care that cannot be staffed. Workforce recruitment and retention has long been a challenge in healthcare and over the last two years, it has become much more challenging due to the pandemic. And, due to the highly contagious nature of Omicron, healthcare workers are testing positive for COVID and unable to work for several days. On any given day, 8 to 16 percent of workers in Maryland nursing homes are not able to work after testing positive for the virus.

LeadingAge Maryland supports the need to study this industry workforce crisis. In particular, we appreciate that the bill requires the Commission to establish an advisory committee or workgroup with a member who is an individual of a health care industry stakeholder group. Those closest to these challenges must be included in the dialogue to ensure that the solutions that are proposed will have sustainable impact.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 440.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield, 410.446.1992