



**Testimony of Ricarra Jones, Political Director of 1199SEIU on
HB 975 Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment for Nurses and Nursing Workers –
Program Establishment and Funding Act
Position: FAVORABLE
March 4, 2022**

Dear Chairwoman Delegate 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 HB 975.**

HB 975 would positively impact many Marylanders by easing the educational loan burden for nurses and nursing workers who work in medically underserved areas.

HB 975 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, HB 975 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 HB 975** and ask for a **FAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones
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