

# **HB 982\_ProgramsScholarshipsHumanServicesCareers\_Le**

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Maryland  
Hospital Association

March 30, 2023

To: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Letter of Support As Amended - House Bill 982 - Programs and Scholarships for Human Services Careers and Probation Agents and State Contributions to Supplemental Retirement Plans

Dear Chair Feldman:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 982 as amended in the House.

Maryland hospitals are facing the most critical staffing shortage in recent memory. A 2022 [GlobalData](#) report estimates a statewide shortage of 5,000 full-time registered nurses and 4,000 licensed practical nurses. The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) also is facing an equally critical workforce shortage. Between Jan. 1, 2022 and Jan. 1, 2023 vacancies rose by 93 positions—"more than double the number needed to meet the budgeted turnover expectancy and is nearly 17% of all authorized positions," according to FY 2024 budget analysis.<sup>1</sup>

When the state's human services workforce is not adequately staffed, Maryland hospitals and the community are impacted. Over the past several years, our hospitals studied the reasons a patient may be difficult to discharge. They found children and adolescents are at risk for a delay, especially children with involvement in one or more state agencies, such as foster youth.

Last fall, hospitals joined the Maryland Department of Health to better define the reasons behind discharge difficulties in this population. The most common cause was capacity issues, but hospital staff identified state agency processes as a primary or secondary cause of delays in most overstays. These include inability to place in a group home, no identification of foster care placement, unavailable therapeutic foster care placement, absent or deceased parents, and delays in guardian seeking to relinquish rights and interstate compact approval. It is expected that these challenges would be mitigated by a strengthened human services workforce.

We applaud the innovative approach of HB 982 to build and strengthen the human services workforce pipeline and provide graduating high school students with scholarships, mentorship, and a pathway toward upward mobility. We know these programs are essential to address lack of opportunity, conditions, or social factors that prevent access to educational and career options. HB 982 paves a sustainable pathway to reinforce the human services workforce and keep our students in Maryland by linking them to careers in a high need field.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on HB 982 as amended in the House.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Human Services (DHS) Social Services Administration (SSA). "FY 2024 Operating Budget Analysis." [mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2024fy-budget-docs-operating-N00B-DHS-Social-Services.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2024fy-budget-docs-operating-N00B-DHS-Social-Services.pdf) (accessed March 28, 2023).

For more information, please contact:  
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**HB 982\_AFSCME3\_FAV.pdf**

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## **HB 982 - State Employees – Programs and Scholarships for Human Services Careers and Probation Agents and State Contributions to Supplemental Retirement Plans**

### **POSITION: FAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 982. This legislation addresses recruitment challenges in state government by providing for a collaboration between local school systems in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Prince George’s County to develop a feeder program into certain classifications in the Department of Human Resources. It also adds Parole and Probation Officers to a Loan Assistance Repayment Program. Finally, HB 982 provides that the State will provide a supplemental retirement match of up to \$600 for an employee that either contributes at least \$600 to their supplemental retirement or pays down their student loan debt by at least \$600.

The staffing levels in state government are historically low, and the vacancy rates are historically high. HB 982 is important legislation to help us start to rebuild our state government. We should be identifying those state jobs that are suitable for high school graduates and working with local school systems to promote a career in state government. For many of our members, a state job was their entry point into the middle class. In state government, you are evaluated based on your merits and if you do good work, state jobs can provide the income stability, health care, and retirement security to live a happy life and take care of your family.

Others are driven to state jobs right after college out of a duty of public service and wanting to help people and keep us safe. These public servants deserve assistance with their student loan repayments.

We are grateful to the Speaker for making this a top priority issue. We support HB 982 and urge a favorable report. Thank you.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.  
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.  
800.492.1996

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