



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**
February 9, 2023
House Bill 611: State Board of Nursing – Sunset Extension,
Licensure Exceptions, and Board Operations and Membership
Written Only Testimony

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 611. HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state.

House Bill 611 continues the State Board of Nursing in accordance with the provisions of the Maryland Program Evaluation Act (sunset law) by extending to July 1, 2025, the termination provisions relating to the statutory and regulatory authority of the Board; alters the exceptions to the registered nursing and licensed practical nurse licensure requirements; and, provides that, for a certain period of time, the Secretary of Health, rather than the Board, has authority over the infrastructure operations of the Board.

Based on experience and of years of interaction with the State Board of Nursing, we believe it is valuable to share these observations at the onset:

- The capacity of the State Board of Nursing has been reviewed and studied numerous times, producing reports in 2022, 2021, 2013, and 2010. The common thread of the various reports is that the Board is consistently in need of additional staffing and better IT systems.
- As the Board's Executive Director Karen Evans, RN, has been value-added to the Board and its constituents. While this piece of legislation would allow the Secretary to hire a new executive director that is not a registered nurse (RN), it is absolutely critical that an RN serves as the executive director. And, Ms. Evans has worked tirelessly in her role.
- In observing the official proceedings and actions of the Board, and based on conversations and direct professional experience, the Board has often been antiquated in its approach to education, innovation, and being client and constituent focused—such an approach as been a detriment to educating, recruiting, and retaining our critically important healthcare workforce. This is especially true of nursing assistants and geriatric nursing assistants.
- The Maryland Department of Health already has procurement authority over the Board. Lacking in the previous administration was coordination and collegiality.

We have long heard from our members and have seen that there has been a significant backlog in the Board of Nursing's ability to process new and renewal licensure applications promptly. In addition, there has been a shortage of geriatric nursing assistant testing capacity since before the pandemic.

We appreciate that Karen Evans, RN, has been an engaged and caring partner in our shared critical work. We all want the same thing— a highly functioning, effective State Board of Nursing that is responsive to Maryland's nursing workforce needs, and which expeditiously licenses healthcare professionals following federal and state requirements. We believe to do this there must be a change in the members of the Maryland Board of Nursing.

With the staffing crisis we face, losing any healthcare staff due to the dysfunction of the Board, delays in processing times, or testing capacity poses a serious risk to the health and well-being of Marylanders. Nurses and nursing assistants must receive licensure approval promptly and have access to testing capacity so that they may provide healthcare services to Marylanders in need.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 611.

Submitted by:

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