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HOUSE BILL 531 - CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANTS – LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 531. This bill addresses a critical issue in our State—one that has been a continuing topic for this legislative session – the healthcare worker shortage.

As a member of the Oversight Committee on Quality Care in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living as well as the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland, my fellow committee members and I have heard repeatedly about the difficulties that nursing homes are experiencing as they try to hire staff, with the result that they must rely on more expensive nurse staffing agencies.

This issue does not only affect nursing homes; it affects all other health care settings. For example, hospitals have reported that patients are staying in the hospitals longer because nursing homes cannot admit patients; they simply cannot staff all their beds. This cascade of staffing challenges affects our ability to be successful in controlling costs under our All-Payor Waiver.

To ensure that nursing homes can be appropriately and adequately staffed, we must eliminate any barriers to hiring capable and qualified staff member.

One such barrier is prohibition for nursing homes to employ certified nursing assistants (known as CNAs). Nationally, CNAs can work in all settings. However, Maryland is the **only** state that does not allow CNAs to work in nursing homes.

Instead, Maryland requires nursing home staff to be geriatric nursing assistants; their training could be viewed as an “add-on” to the certification for nursing assistants.

To eliminate this staffing barrier, House Bill 531 makes necessary changes to align GNAs with CNAs, which make it possible for CNAs to work in nursing homes.

House Bill 531 does not reduce training requirements for those working in nursing homes. Instead, in this new phase of health care, we must look closely at those requirements in current law to determine if they remain necessary or are simply barriers.

The intention of this bill is to create fluidity for health care workers so they are able to move between health care settings, thus increasing the workforce that nursing homes

can hire and hopefully encouraging individuals to remain in Maryland's nursing homes and health care facilities rather than leaving to work in neighboring states.

I understand that there are recommended amendments from the Maryland Board of Nursing. I look forward to a discussion with them and other stakeholders to understand the intention of these amendments.

This bill is not intended to add any further requirements to our current CNA workforce and we want to make sure that any amendments do not do that.

- I request a favorable vote.