



CARE BRAVELY

HB531 – Certified Nursing Assistants – Licensing Requirements and Administrative Updates

House Health and Government Operations Committee – February 22, 2023

Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development

Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB531. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

House Bill 531 repeals references to “geriatric nursing assistant” (GNA) and replaces them with “certified nursing assistant” (CNA). This change will allow nursing homes to employ Maryland Board of Nursing-certified CNAs who successfully complete an approved nursing assistant training program complying with federal and State law without the burden of an additional designation of GNA to perform delegated tasks. In Maryland and throughout the country, healthcare providers face a shortage of healthcare workers across all settings. Recruitment and retention of employees is even more difficult in skilled nursing facility (SNF) and rehabilitation centers and has grown even more challenging during and after the COVID pandemic. Many licensed healthcare professionals have retired or sought positions in other employment sectors as the overall job market recovers from the pandemic with fewer available employees.

To become a CNA in most states, an individual must complete a state-approved training program, and pass both federal and State examinations. Once licensed, the CNA may work in most healthcare settings including both hospitals and nursing homes. However, in order to work in a Maryland nursing home, an individual must complete an additional certification step to become a licensed GNA.

This legislation will eliminate the extra step for nursing assistants to work in a Maryland skilled nursing facility (also known as a nursing home). CNAs will be able to work in all healthcare settings and this legislation will broaden the pool of qualified applicants for positions in nursing homes. Additionally, it will allow out of state CNAs to be qualified to work in a Maryland skilled nursing facility without the added burden of an additional certification that does not provide any substantive enhancement of skills and knowledge. This streamlining of the certification process will help attract employees to Maryland for employment in various settings.

These changes will help address the staffing shortages faced by Maryland nursing homes. Nursing assistants are truly the backbone of the nursing home workforce – they keep things running smoothly and provide quality care to residents and patients. Removing barriers to entry for nursing assistants in long-term care settings is a critical and important step we can take now that will help with the ongoing workforce shortage. Many of these CNAs will also be able to work in other healthcare settings such as hospitals. As an added benefit, the CNA position often functions as a gateway to additional career enhancement for positions such as Registered Nurse and other professional healthcare positions.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB531.

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