



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 441 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program
– Nancy Grasmick – Public School – Professional Award

Hearing Date: February 13, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association and the Maryland Association of School Health Nurses supports strongly supports *Senate Bill 441 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program – Nancy Grasmick – Public School – Professional Award – Public School*. The bill addresses an oversight that has resulted in the exclusion of school nurses from the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program. This loan program was created by the Maryland General Assembly to address professional shortages in State agencies, local government agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) has recognized that nurses can participate in the program. However, MHEC’s website states that school nurses are excluded. All other school health professions may participate, including speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and social workers. This means that school nurses are the only type of nurse that is not eligible for the program as well as the only school health professional not eligible. This exclusion does not make sense, and appears to be an oversight.

There is a severe shortage of school nurses across Maryland, and we ask for the Maryland General Assembly for help in correcting the exclusion of school nurses from the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program. We know that loan repayment programs are not going to solve the school nurse shortage, but it is an important strategy in addressing

targeted shortage areas. The recent report of the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis highlighted the interest in loan repayment programs as a critical tool to addressing health professional shortages.ⁱ

We need more nurses in Maryland schools. Many school nurses must split their time between more than one school. On average, Maryland jurisdictions have 0.74 nurse per school, with an average of 848 students per school nurse. Some jurisdictions, such as Frederick County and Baltimore City, have ratios that where there are more than 1,500 students per nurse.ⁱⁱ

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ[https://health.maryland.gov/docs/SB%20440%20Ch.%20708%20\(2022\)%20%E2%80%93%202023%20Final%20Report%20%E2%80%93%20Commission%20to%20Study%20the%20Heal.pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/docs/SB%20440%20Ch.%20708%20(2022)%20%E2%80%93%202023%20Final%20Report%20%E2%80%93%20Commission%20to%20Study%20the%20Heal.pdf)

ⁱⁱ 2018-2019 MSDE Survey (see attached)