



February 14, 2024

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

BILL: SB 441 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award - Public School Nurses

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support SB 441 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award - Public School Nurses.

This bill would expand the Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award to include public school nurses.

Maryland’s health care work force has experienced unprecedented levels of fatigue and attrition, mostly due to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-existing nursing shortages have only gotten worse. The Baltimore Sun reports that, nationally, “[m]ore than 275,000 additional nurses are needed by 2030.”ⁱ Worse yet, the Baltimore Banner notes, “Nationally, about a third of schools lack full-time nurses... A big issue in recruiting school nurses is pay. Two-thirds of registered nurses in schools earn less than \$60,000 annually...”ⁱⁱ

Considering the expense of enrolling in nursing school coupled with a relatively low level of compensation in a school setting, Maryland must do everything in its power to entice additional workers to join the school nursing field. By making school nurses eligible for a grant under the Nancy Grasmick Public School Professional Award program, Maryland has an opportunity to defray some of the financial burdens currently being experienced by our school nurse population. Although significantly more must be done to bolster our health care workforce in schools, SB 441 represents a good faith effort to reward the dedication and public service of our school nurses.

The Horizon Foundation believes that everyone deserves access to quality and affordable health care. SB 441 would increase access to care in schools by

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helping recruit additional registered nurses to work in these spaces. For this reason, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 441 and urges a FAVORABLE report.**

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2023/05/05/maryland-nursing-schools-aim-to-diversify-students-update-curriculums-amid-shortage/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/baltimore-city-school-nurses-L47WL6VLGRB33B5TADSCJ4BYYY/>