



576 Johnsville Road
Sykesville, MD 21784

TO: Finance Committee
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: Senate Bill 37, Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship Program Workgroup
DATE: February 13, 2024
POSITION: **Favorable**

LeadingAge Maryland supports Senate Bill 137, Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship Program Workgroup.

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 140 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Members of LeadingAge Maryland provide health care, housing, and services to more than 20,000 older persons each year. Our mission is to be the trusted voice for aging in Maryland, and our vision is that Maryland is a state where older adults have access to the services they need, when they need them, in the place they call home. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland.

Senate Bill 137 establishes a Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship Program Workgroup to study the feasibility of developing and implementing a nurse apprenticeship program in Maryland. The workgroup shall make recommendations on the program framework and a sustainable funding model and report them to the Governor on or before April 1, 2025.

The pathway to a career in nursing is certainly a challenging one. Enrolling in a nursing program can seem out of reach for many applicants as it is highly competitive and a serious commitment of time and money. A nurse apprenticeship is a potential pathway that provides prospective nurses with a more accessible way of becoming licensed registered nurses. It allows students to work in a healthcare facility and generate income while completing their nursing programs and receiving their education. A nurse apprentice is allowed an opportunity to hands-on experience and to be well trained and prepared to enter the workforce. Employers are also

given a chance to train and work with the students closely and to increase their chances of recruiting them for job positions after graduation.

The state of Maryland is one of the few states allowed to develop and implement apprenticeship training models alongside Illinois, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and others. The state of Nevada has already taken steps to implement an apprentice nursing program designed by its state's board of nursing. A health system in Kentucky is also among the first to create a state-accredited nursing apprenticeship in the United States, developed in response to a profound nursing shortage in the state. Another one implemented in Minnesota had 122 nurse apprentices enrolled by 2018, after being awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to fund apprenticeships for nurses. The Alabama Board of Nursing is among the latest to permit and regulate Student Nurse Apprentices, which went into effect in March 2022.

The worsening healthcare workforce crisis calls for immediate relief through all appropriate means available to us. A registered nurse apprenticeship program offers such relief by providing a new and accessible pathway to a career in nursing. The gap in nursing is profound across all states including Maryland. As other states begin to take steps forward, Maryland should be allowed to do the same. This bill allows the formation of a Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship Program Workgroup responsible for reviewing existing models of such programs in other states and countries, studying the feasibility of developing and implementing one in our State, and reporting recommendations on its structure and funding. This will facilitate a first step in the development of our own nurse apprenticeship programs in Maryland.

At LeadingAge Maryland, we advocate for better health outcomes and a stronger healthcare workforce, especially for older populations in greatest need of long-term care. Aging services organizations struggle to meet nursing staffing requirements. We believe Senate Bill 137 offers a collaborative effort and attempt to fill in the gaps for a growing demand in nursing.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 137.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield, 410.446.1992