



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2024

Senate Bill 999: Certified Nursing Assistants – Licensing Requirements and Administrative Updates
Written Only Testimony

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 999. HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state. HFAM is affiliated with the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which is the largest association in the United States representing long-term and post-acute care providers.

Senate Bill 999 exempts an individual who practices as a certain nursing assistant for less than 4 months under federal regulations from the State's certification requirement; alters the designation of, and licensure requirements for, certified nursing assistants and geriatric nursing assistants; requires an applicant for certification as a certified nursing assistant to complete a nursing assistant competency evaluation.

In Maryland and throughout the country, we are facing a shortage of healthcare workers across settings, with particularly fewer people working in skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers. Workforce recruitment and retention was a challenge before the pandemic and it has only grown more challenging. Licensed healthcare professionals are scarce and all healthcare settings are competing for employees from the same labor pool.

To become a certified nursing assistant (CNA) in most states, an individual must complete a state-approved training program, take a federal exam, and complete a state certification exam. Once a 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 geriatric nursing assistant (GNA).

This legislation will eliminate the extra step for nursing assistants to work in a Maryland 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. 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.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 999.

Submitted by:

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