



576 Johnsville Road
Sykesville, MD 21784

TO: House Health & Government Operations Committee
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: Senate Bill 999, Certified Nursing Assistants – Licensing Requirements and Administrative Updates
DATE: March 26, 2024
POSITION: **Favorable**

LeadingAge Maryland supports Senate Bill 999, Certified Nursing Assistants – Licensing Requirements and Administrative Updates.

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.

This legislation repeals the classification of a “geriatric nurse assistant” in favor of “certified nurse assistant.” Under the bill, a certified nursing assistant must successfully complete an approved nursing assistant training program and meet federal and state laws. The State Board of Nursing is required to provide notifications to geriatric nursing assistants and nursing homes regarding the changes resulting from passage of this bill, including updating the title of geriatric nursing assistants on the renewal of a license. We support the intent and goal of this bill and would also urge the Committee to identify a list of stakeholders who would be best poised to fully evaluate and address this issue.

In light of staffing shortages across the State, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing homes and struggle to secure sufficient staff. A Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) is a professional who performs crucial nursing tasks delegated by a registered nurse or a licensed

practical nurse. To become a CNA in most states, individuals must complete a state-approved training program, complete a national and federally required examination, and complete a state-mandated certification exam. A Certified Nursing Assistant is then allowed to work in most healthcare settings including hospitals, long-term care facilities, and nursing homes. The state of Maryland, however, has a unique credentialing system.

Maryland offers several levels and types of nursing assistant certification. Certified Nursing Assistant is regarded as an entry-level credential for those who have completed training programs and cleared background checks. The Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA) credential is regarded as the equivalent of the CNA credential issued in most other states. In Maryland, CNAs are only allowed to work in licensed nursing homes for 120 days before they obtain the required GNA certification. If enacted, Senate Bill 999 would alter Maryland's credentialing system to resemble most other states by replacing the classification of "geriatric" with "certified" nursing assistant.

LeadingAge Maryland is invested in ensuring that professionals who are qualified to deliver care in places that most need it, like nursing homes, are allowed a facilitated opportunity to do so. The intent of this bill is to seek to remove the barrier of Maryland's current two-pronged nursing assistant credentialing system. It is also important that there is not undue burden placed on current CNAs and GNAs in terms of any additional examination or training requirements that might be implemented. LeadingAge Maryland recommends that as part of this process, the Maryland Board of Nursing and other stakeholders be convened to fully evaluate the current CNA and GNA certification processes to identify what changes would be necessary to reach this goal. The changes suggested by this bill would no longer require a "geriatric" classification for certified nursing assistants to work in comprehensive care facilities, because CNAs in Maryland would then meet the federal requirements to do so. These changes may also help out-of-state CNAs be qualified to work in Maryland nursing homes without the requirement of additional certification. Introducing such changes is likely to be a step forward in addressing the care-team staffing shortages that long-term care facilities and nursing homes are suffering from.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 999.

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