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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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SB 407

**State Board of Nursing - Advanced Practice Nursing Licensure and
Specialty Certification - Reciprocity Discussions
(Maryland Border States Advanced Practice Nursing Act)**

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Hayes and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 407, which directs the Maryland State Board of Nursing to pursue advanced practice nursing reciprocity agreements with MD's border states, including Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The Board of Nursing shall also report back annually on the status of these negotiations, including whether agreements have been entered into and terms of such agreements. If the Board of Nursing is unsuccessful in securing any reciprocal agreements, they shall report any barriers to entering into these agreements along with suggestions for any regulatory or legislative changes that may be necessary.

Maryland faces ongoing challenges in maintaining an adequate healthcare workforce, particularly in underserved and rural areas. By facilitating licensure reciprocity with neighboring states, this bill will make it easier for qualified advanced practice registered nurses to practice in Maryland.

The Board of Nursing can and should pursue these conversations immediately. The success of these agreements is why we passed SB 221/HB 146 last year. This legislation introduced by the MD Dept. of Health authorizes any health occupations board, that does not otherwise have statutory authority to do so, to adopt regulations establishing reciprocity for individuals who are licensed or certified in another State that also offers similar reciprocity to individuals licensed or certified by the board.

The MD Department of Health advised in last year's bill that licensure by reciprocity for health care professionals in surrounding states is needed (1) due to the proximity and corresponding geographical relationship of nearby states; (2) to improve access to care and

treatment, particularly for rural State residents; and (3) to address current health care workforce challenges.

In fact, the Board of Physicians has implemented reciprocal agreements with Virginia and DC and said in their testimony last year that the "option has proved very popular, and in the first four months alone, the Board issued more than 80 licenses by reciprocity."

Unlike interstate compacts, which require a certain number of states and political compromise when it comes to scope of practice, reciprocity agreements are negotiated independently by health occupations boards. Reciprocity gives each health occupation board more control when choosing to enter a reciprocity agreement. In addition, the Board of Nursing can generate revenue as a prospective licensee will still apply for and be issued a Maryland license. By issuing a Maryland license the BON knows exactly who is authorized to practice in the state which is essential for patient safety and board regulation.

All of this means that Maryland residents can benefit from an influx of providers more immediately.

This bill will strengthen healthcare access and delivery across our state. I believe this bill represents a practical, common-sense solution to improve healthcare access for all Marylanders. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.