



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill (HB) 19 –Health Occupations - Nursing - Loan Repayment, Education, and Sunset Extension (Building Opportunities for Nurses Act of 2025) – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this Letter of Support with Amendments for House Bill (HB) 19 –Health Occupations - Nursing - Loan Repayment, Education, and Sunset Extension (Building Opportunities for Nurses Act of 2025).

House Bill 19 seeks to extend the Maryland Board of Nursing’s sunset termination by five years pursuant to the provisions outlined in the Maryland Program Evaluation Act. Moreover, the bill extends the Secretary of Health’s authority over the Board’s infrastructure and operations for an additional 5 years. This extension will help continue the strong partnership between the Board and Department that was established under HB 611 of 2023. Absent House Bill 19, the Secretary’s authority over the Board’s infrastructure operations is set to expire on June 30, 2025. Such a partnership is necessary to help resolve outstanding independent evaluation issues, and help migrate the Board to a new licensure system that can serve as a model for all health occupation boards in the state.

The Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Nurses and Nursing Support Staff (MLARP NNSS) was established by SB696 / HB0975, Chapter 0314 of 2022 to offer higher education loan repayment assistance to health professionals who practice in healthcare professional shortage areas. The MLARP NNSS statute currently excludes health professionals contracted by for-profit entities from the program, although these professionals may serve the same populations as eligible non-profit or public organizations.

HB19 aims to expand the eligibility of MLARP NNSS to employees working at for-profit entities and to healthcare professionals practicing a medical specialty other than primary care at these entities. Expanding the definition of “eligible field of employment” will expand program eligibility by increasing the number of locations where providers can be incentivized to practice and assist in reducing eligibility confusion by program applicants. HB19 also aims to provide

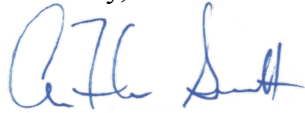
flexibility for the prioritization of medical specialties, if desired by the Department.

Proposed amendments to HB 19 include retaining Nursing Support Staff professions in the program to continue to permit the greatest eligibility for program participation by professions in areas of need in the state.

Additionally, HB 19 extends the termination dates of the Income Tax Credit for Preceptors in Areas with Healthcare Workforce Shortages Programs to June 30, 2030. The sunset extension dates will allow time for the Department to address administrative, funding, and operational issues affecting the program to make it more effective and responsive to the healthcare workforce strategy of the state. Currently, the Department is completing a legislative report due to the General Assembly on December 1, 2025, that explores if tax credits contributed to the expansion of preceptorships and the extension of the program sunset dates will permit further analysis of program impacts.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH
Secretary