



CARE BRAVELY

HB998 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants – Administration and Funding

House Appropriations Committee – February 25, 2020

Testimony of Matthew Poffenroth, M.D., Chief Clinical Officer, LifeBridge Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in strong SUPPORT of HB998. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital). Sinai Hospital, our flagship center, is an “independent academic medical center (IAMC).” In addition to graduate medical education provided at teaching hospitals and integrated delivery systems that are either owned by or affiliated with medical schools and universities, physician education is thriving at community-based hospitals.

It is helpful to think of IAMCs as hybrid entities - community hospitals and systems sponsoring medical residency programs fully accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). This hybrid type of provider brings a level of care that otherwise may not be accessible to communities not located near urban teaching hospitals. Sinai Hospital operates residency programs in the following practice areas:

- General Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Ophthalmology
- Pediatrics
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

While each area provides specialty and tertiary care, three of the areas – Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Pediatrics – focus on primary care. Residents work alongside employed and community physicians, physician assistants and other types of providers in all our facilities. Incentive programs play a key role in attracting students and practitioners to these types of health care professions, and to motivating them to continue to serve in communities that most need them. All of these providers will benefit from the loan assistance repayment opportunities presented in HB998, and given the nature of our work in Medically Underserved Areas and Health Professional Shortage Areas such as West and Northwest Baltimore City as well as parts of Western Baltimore County and Carroll County, we hope will be incentivized to remain in Maryland to continue to serve these communities.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB998.