



January 30, 2024

House of Delegates Health and Governmental Operations Committee
HB 354 - Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee - Establishment

Support

HB 354 has the potential to increase the nursing workforce in Maryland. The bill will: 1) support mobility for students into License Practical Nursing (LPN) programs in Maryland, and 2) create a workgroup to examine successful education mobility programs that advance high school students into coursework to prepare them for nursing education.

The nursing workforce in Maryland is decreasing due to the aging and retirement of current nurses and problems with the education pipeline due to a shortage of faculty and clinical education rotations sites.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic further affected the nursing shortage. Maryland Hospital Association (MHA) (2022) data indicate that 13,800 additional RNs and 9,200 additional LPNs will be needed by 2035.²

HB 354 will increase the number of LPNs in Maryland. LPNs are educated in 12 to 18 months (as opposed to 2-4 years for RN education). LPNs have the education to assist the health care team in acute care and long-term care facilities. MHAs 2022 Workgroup suggested removing barriers from nursing education to increase the nursing workforce. LPNs are an untapped resource and can provide the right staff mix for skilled nursing care. Many LPNs continue education to achieve registered nursing licensure through transition programs.

Traditional apprenticeship (on the job training) programs are not the solution to Maryland's nursing workforce shortage. Health care professionals need to be educated by College **educators** in a purposeful manner. The innovate program proposed in **HB 354** will create access to community college with wrap around services for those who cannot access nursing education opportunities. The pilot pathway programs will provide financial assistance for tuition, books, fees, and living expenses needed to support student success and increase the number of LPNs and eventually RNs to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

I have been a community college nurse educator for over 30 years. I've stayed in the position for so long for one reason – education at this level changes lives. All students face challenges in college, particularly in professional health care programs, but I have witnessed the hardships students face firsthand. I see intelligent students who cannot succeed in nursing school because they are working full time, managing kids and partners, and trying to find time to study. I am in the unfortunate position to see as many as 20% of nursing students at the Community College of

Baltimore County unable to maintain passing grades in the RN program. This percentage is in line with national findings, where 20% of first year associate degree nursing students leave the program after the first year.³ This is not due to lack of intelligence, it is due to lack of time, resources, and support systems.

Incremental steps or stackable credentials in education are manageable for working students. Wrap around services and braided funding could help many more Maryland students find meaningful careers. Community Colleges are geared to provide support services and quality education to students. By supporting students to become LPNs, students can work part time while continuing their education to become RNs.

HB 354 could help minority students in many areas of the state achieve a college education and ultimately help increase the nursing workforce in Maryland.

Thank you for a favorable vote on HB 354

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¹American Nurses Association (2022). Nurses in The Workforce. <http://www.nurseworld.org/policy/workforce/>

²Maryland Hospital Association (2022). State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce Report. <https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2022-state-of-maryland-s-health-care-workforce-report.pdf>

³Olsen, J. M. (2017). Integrative review of admission factors related to associate degree nursing program success. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 56(2), 85-93. DOI: [10.3928/01484834-20170123-05](https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20170123-05)