



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 28, 2023

To: The Honorable Benjamin Barnes, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Re: Letter of Support - House Bill 982 - Programs and Scholarships for Human Services Careers and Probation Agents and State Contributions to Supplemental Retirement Plans

Dear Chair Barnes:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 982.

Maryland hospitals are facing the most critical staffing shortage in recent memory. A 2022 [GlobalData](#) report estimates a statewide shortage of 5,000 full-time registered nurses and 4,000 licensed practical nurses. The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) also is facing an equally critical workforce shortage. Between Jan. 1, 2022 and Jan. 1, 2023 vacancies rose by 93 positions—"more than double the number needed to meet the budgeted turnover expectancy and is nearly 17% of all authorized positions," according to FY 2024 budget analysis for the DHS Social Services Administration.¹

When the state's human services workforce is not adequately staffed, Maryland hospitals and the community are impacted. Over the past several years, our hospitals studied the reasons a patient may be difficult to discharge. They found children and adolescents are at risk for a delay, especially children with involvement in one or more state agencies, such as foster youth.

Last fall, hospitals joined the Maryland Department of Health to better define the reasons behind discharge difficulties in this population. The most common cause was capacity issues, but hospital staff identified state agency processes as a primary or secondary cause of delays in most overstay. These include inability to place in a group home, no identification of foster care placement, unavailable therapeutic foster care placement, absent or deceased parents, and delays in guardian seeking to relinquish rights and interstate compact approval.

We applaud the innovative approach of HB 982 to build and strengthen the human services workforce pipeline and provide graduating high school students with scholarships, mentorship, and a pathway toward upward mobility. We know these programs are essential to address lack of opportunity, conditions, or social factors that prevent access to educational and career options. HB 982 paves a sustainable pathway to reinforce the human services workforce and keep our students in Maryland by linking them to careers in a high need field.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on HB 982.

For more information, please contact:
Brian Sims, Vice President, Quality & Equity

¹ FY 2024 Operating Budget Analysis. "[Social Services Administration: Department of Human Services](#),".