



Maryland  
Hospital Association

January 24, 2023

To: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Letter of Support- Senate Bill 4- Higher Education- The Senator Delores G. Kelley Scholarship Program - Establishment

Dear Chair Feldman:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 4, which would establish the Senator Delores G. Kelley Scholarship Program. This program awards scholarships to students eligible for a Pell Grant who are residents or high school graduates of participating counties. These scholarships are designed to support students interested in attending Maryland Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Such a scholarship program would expand opportunities for students who need financial aid to pursue higher education—and, potentially, health care career pathways. Our only caution is to ensure this program does not significantly increase the administrative or financial burden for participating HBCUs. Increasing and diversifying the health care workforce pipeline will help support an aging and growing population and mitigate ongoing health disparities.

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. Without intervention, shortages could double or even triple by 2035. MHA's [2022 State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce report](#) outlines a roadmap to ensure Maryland has the health care workforce it needs now and into the future. One of the key components is to remove barriers to health care education through tuition assistance, stipends, loan repayment, and other incentives.

According to a [2022 Urban Institute study](#), Black adults were less likely to identify as the same race as their health care provider compared with White adults and adults of other races.<sup>1</sup> A 2022 study conducted by [Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) found that patient physician race concordance increased consultation time and reduced the likelihood of an inpatient admission, diagnostic testing, and the rate of return visits to the emergency department

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<sup>1</sup> Gonzalez, Dulce., Kenney, Genevieve., McDaniel, Marla., and O'Brien, Claire. "[Racial, Ethnic, and Language Concordance Between Patients and Their Usual Healthcare Providers.](#)" Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Center. (March 2022).

following discharge.<sup>2</sup> Maryland has been recognized as the “[most diverse state on the East Coast](#).”<sup>3,4</sup> It is critical the health care workforce reflects the population served.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on SB 4.

For more information, please contact:  
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<sup>2</sup> Ye, Han. and Yi, Junjian. “[Patient-Physician Race Concordance, Physician Decisions, and Patient Outcomes](#).” The Review of Economics and Statistics, 1-39. (July 25, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Witte, Brian. “[Maryland is Now the Most Diverse State on the East Coast, Even More So Than DC: Census](#).” ABC7News, August 13, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> [United States Census Bureau. “2020 Census: Racial and Ethnic Diversity Index By State.”](#) (August 12, 2021).