



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 669- Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship Program Workgroup

Position: *Support with Amendments*

March 14, 2023

Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

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 669.

[Maryland hospitals](#) are facing the most critical staffing shortage in recent memory. According to the most recent MHA data, RNs & LPNs/nursing assistants make up 39% of Maryland's hospital workforce.¹ Right now, one in every four nursing positions is vacant.² This situation will worsen according to a 2022 [GlobalData](#) report, which 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.

As the [Maryland Department of Labor's Healthcare Apprenticeship Workgroup](#) explored during the interim, there are opportunities for more health care apprenticeships. MHA supports this concept and looks forward to engaging in further conversations with the state and other stakeholders to remove barriers so we can expand and grow a diverse and talented workforce.

SB 669 would establish a work group to explore a Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship Program. While we support creative ways to grow the workforce pipeline, we respectfully recommend amendments to strengthen the proposed work group. First, we recommend expanding the membership. A successful apprenticeship requires partnerships between the employer and education partners. We recommend adding representatives from all levels of education—geographically diverse high schools, community colleges, four-year institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In addition, we recommend adding representatives from industries representing the health care continuum including long-term care, home health, and federally qualified health care centers. In particular, we recommend adding a chief nursing officer, a nursing school dean or director and a representative from the [Maryland Nurse Residency Collaborative](#).

Given the increase in demand for licensed practical nurses in acute care settings, it would also be advantageous for this work group to consider a licensed practical nurse (LPN) apprenticeship for high school students. Howard Community College, for example, launched an [LPN apprenticeship program](#) and surgical technician apprenticeship program and is partnering with

¹ MHA Workforce Survey – January 2023

² MHA Workforce Survey – January 2023

local hospitals³. This work group could explore what, if any, challenges these programs and others faced and what support may be needed to bring this model to scale statewide. Since there are vacancies across the health care workforce, it would be beneficial to expand the focus of the work group beyond nursing.

We appreciate the sponsor introducing this bill and look forward to collaborating to support, build, and diversify the workforce pipeline. Hospitals are often the economic engines of their communities. If we work together as a state, we can build pathways to stable careers with opportunities for upward movement. In doing so, we can grow our own health care workforce.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on SB 669 with the recommended amendments.

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³ Business Monthly. "[HCC Partners with Hospitals on Apprenticeship Programs.](#)" (Dec. 1, 2022).