



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 14, 2024

To: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair, House Ways & Means Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 837- More Opportunities for Career-Focused Students Act of 2024

Dear Chair Atterbeary:

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 837.

Maryland hospitals continue to experience workforce shortages. Data show high vacancy rates in Maryland hospitals for:

- Surgical technicians, 17.8%
- Licensed practical nurses (LPN), 16.8%
- Nurse practitioners, 12.3%
- Registered nurses (RN), 12.1%
- Radiology technicians, 10.4%

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. The recommendations focus on four areas: expand Maryland's workforce pipeline, remove barriers to health care education through tuition assistance, stipends, loan repayment, and other incentives, retain the health care workforce, and leverage talent with new care models.

HB 837 elevates the pursuit of vocational training for students. This is important for the health care workforce since the rising demand for health care services necessitates the creation of a robust workforce across the care continuum. Many hospital jobs do not require a four-year degree. Registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants, who comprise 39% of the hospital workforce, require a maximum of a two-year degree except for a registered nurse, who can pursue a two- or four-year degree.<sup>1</sup> Other hospital jobs, such as a pharmacy technician, only require a certification.

Hospital data show nearly 1 in 5, or 18.9% of, nursing assistant positions are currently vacant.<sup>1</sup> Over the past year, Maryland hospitals have worked together to address the high demand for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) by creating an acute care CNA pathway, which includes a standardized exam.

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<sup>1</sup> MHA Workforce Survey – January 2023

HB 837 would acknowledge the acute care CNA pathway as a viable post-secondary education opportunity for students. This bill opens the door to opportunities for students who want to start their career immediately after high school. This will prove beneficial in not only enhancing career prospects for our youth, but in also effectively addressing the needs of the health care system.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 837.

For more information, please contact:  
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