



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

Leading for Better Health

June 10, 2024

The Honorable Scott Martin
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Box 203013
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3013

The Honorable Vincent Hughes
Minority Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Box 203007
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3007

Dear Chairman Martin and Chairman Hughes:

On behalf of more than 230 members statewide, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) writes to express support for the Grow PA – Post-Secondary and Career Preparation Reform legislative package.

As you know, there is a national health care workforce shortage but the challenges in Pennsylvania are among the most severe. An aging population means more health care professionals are retiring just as demand for care is increasing. A 2021 report ranked Pennsylvania's shortage of nurses the worst in the nation and the commonwealth's shortages of nursing support staff and mental health professionals third most severe. Among the commonwealth's 67 counties, 63 are entirely or partially primary care health professional shortage areas (HPSA) and 53 are entirely or partially mental health HPSAs.

Hospitals continue to experience statewide average vacancy rates of 19 percent for nursing support staff, 14 percent for registered nurses, and more than 10 percent for most direct care positions. Hospitals in rural communities face even greater challenges with average vacancy rates of 28 percent for nursing support staff and 26 percent for registered nurses.

While hospitals and health systems are investing in the workforce of today and planning for the future, partnerships between health care, education, community organizations, and the commonwealth are essential. Public policies, like Grow PA, will help to address health care's workforce challenges by incentivizing students to pursue high-demand careers like nursing and other health care roles deemed in-demand.

High-quality care can't happen without talented teams of health care professionals. To meet Pennsylvanians' health care needs now and into the future, we must make a persistent and sustained effort to grow and support the health care workforce.

HAP thanks the makers of the package for the recognition of the challenges facing the health care community and look forward to continued efforts to grow the workforce of tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Watkins

c: Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee