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BILL NO.: **SB 774**

TITLE: Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee - Establishment

SPONSOR: Senator Lam

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 7, 2023

Baltimore County strongly **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 774 – Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee - Establishment. This legislation would establish the Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program in the Maryland Department of Health.

Currently, Maryland has the longest emergency room wait times in the country, a statistic which many attribute to severe understaffing in Maryland’s hospitals. This shortfall not only extends wait times, but places tremendous burdens on nursing staff that are currently in place. With an average of nearly four hour wait times, overburdened hospitals, and a shrinking pool of nursing candidates, residents throughout the State are not being afforded the world-class healthcare they deserve.

Pathway to nursing programs are vital tools for supporting workforce development and target an industry that is suffering from a critical lack of available staff. These programs provide a customized educational curriculum to train a new generation of nurses and ensure that hospitals have the personnel they need to deliver crucial healthcare services. Baltimore County has partnered with the Community College of Baltimore County and the University of Maryland to initiate a pilot program which would leverage federal ARPA dollars to fully cover the cost of training 30 participants for nursing careers. The Public Health Pathways program in Baltimore County has already drawn significant interest, with almost 500 applications submitted for 30 program seats. As a result, we are planning for program expansion as well as adding supplemental programs to meet the workforce needs of every applicant. Senate Bill 774 would greatly assist the County in its efforts to scale and expand this program. In addition, Baltimore

County stands ready to offer insights and consultation so that other jurisdictions across the State of Maryland may also address their critical healthcare and workforce needs.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 774. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.