



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

CAREER PATHWAYS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKER PROGRAM



December 5, 2023

The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor
The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee

Re: Maryland Senate Bill 518; MSAR 14023

Dear Governor Moore and Chairs Beidle and Pena-Melnyk:

The Maryland Department of Labor is pleased to provide the following update related to the implementation of the Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program. Passed during the 2022 Legislative Session, the program provides matching grants to eligible employers that pay for training programs attended by healthcare workers, thus increasing opportunities for healthcare workers across the state to receive training. As the State continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the recruitment and retention of a highly-skilled direct care workforce is more important than ever.

Best Regards,



Portia Wu
Secretary

Background

In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly enacted *Senate Bill 518 - Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program* (CPHWP), which established the Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program. The Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) is responsible for administering the program, which provides matching grants to eligible employers who pay for training programs attended by health care workers, resulting in increased opportunities for health care workers to receive training across the State.

The statute allocates at least \$1,000,000 annually for MD Labor to disburse as matching grants for the Program. MD Labor may award grants for a maximum of \$50,000. Eligible employers must partner with a Maryland-based Historically Black College or University (HBCU) or Community College to provide training that helps upskill and increases the skillsets for the healthcare workforce.

Planning and Policy Development

In January of 2023, MD Labor held an implementation planning meeting with internal staff. In this meeting, it was determined that MD Labor would develop a policy to guide the implementation of the CPHWP. The policy development team invited all relevant stakeholders to participate in two policy development sessions, held in February and March of 2023. Representatives from the community colleges, HBCUs, and the Maryland Board of Nursing (MBON) participated in these sessions.

Application Process

The *Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program's* policy and corresponding application were issued on May 15, 2023. MD Labor shared the opportunity with internal distribution lists, including one with over 6,500 stakeholders, and other relevant stakeholder groups to ensure interested applicants received notification of the opportunity to apply. Prospective applicants were given 11 weeks to complete applications, which were due on July 28, 2023. MD Labor received three applications.

A three-person review team comprised of DWDAL staff and a representative from MBON reviewed and scored each proposal. In addition, each application was thoroughly reviewed by staff from DWDAL's fiscal unit to ensure the budgetary requirements of the CPHWP were met. At the conclusion of the review process, it was determined that all three applications met the requirements of the grant and would be awarded funding.

Grants began on October 1, 2023. A brief description of each funded project can be found below.

Grantees

Holy Cross Health, Inc.

In partnership with Montgomery College and Anne Arundel Community College, Holy Cross Health, Inc. will provide training to 20 individuals, targeting individuals currently working in positions that do not require a High School Diploma or GED®. Offerings will include Certified Medical Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Central Sterile Processing Technician, Pharmacy Tech, and Certified Health Access Associate. By offering these certifications, the initiative will empower workers to enhance their skills, increase their earning potential, and build a sustainable pathway for personal and professional growth.

Shore Health System, Inc.

Shore Health System, Inc. will partner with Chesapeake College to provide training to upskill 23 of their current employees. Participants will enroll in CNA training, and upon completion, will be prepared to progress to a role paying a higher wage. The University of Maryland Memorial Hospital Foundation is providing matching support for the grant.



Sinai Hospital of Baltimore

Sinai Hospital of Baltimore will utilize funding to provide training opportunities to more than 30 incumbent workers who, prior to training, earn less than \$20 per hour. Offerings such as Pharmacy Technician and Medicine Aide will be offered by Baltimore City Community College and the Community College of Baltimore County.

Future Plans

With just 13% of the annual allocation awarded through the first competitive grant process, MD Labor will release another opportunity to apply for funding in January of 2024. MD Labor will cast a wide net, sharing this opportunity with several stakeholder groups to maximize interest in the opportunity.

Required Data

As required by the statute, Labor is prepared to report on the metrics of the program. However, because grants began in October of 2023, there is limited data to report. Below is the data required by the statute that is currently available.

- Amount of Funds Dispersed
 - Sinai Hospital of Baltimore - \$50,000
 - Shore Health System, Inc.- \$32,325
 - Holy Cross Health, Inc.- \$49,942.54

- Community Colleges and HBCUs Participating
 - Baltimore City Community College
 - Community College of Baltimore County
 - Chesapeake Community College
 - Montgomery College
 - Anne Arundel Community College

MD Labor looks forward to reporting on other required metrics in the 2024 Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program Report.

Conclusion

Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare workers are experiencing high levels of burnout, resulting in low retention rates. By investing in advancement opportunities through the development of career pathways, the CPHWP will build a stronger, more highly-skilled workforce. MD Labor looks forward to its continued work related to the implementation of this exciting initiative and sharing the many successes of the CPHWP in future reports.