



Minnesota Hospital Association

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Chair Fateh and members of the Higher Education Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA), we write in support of SF 1288 (Putnam) to establish an allied health scholarship program. It is well documented that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed an enormous amount of stress on the entire health care workforce. The Minnesota Department of Health documented in a recent health care workforce survey that since the start of the pandemic health care job vacancies are increasing and the share of providers planning to leave their jobs in the next 5-years is increasing, specifically in rural areas. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) estimates that there are currently 52,000 health care job vacancies, resulting in 1 in 4 total job vacancies in Minnesota is currently in health care.

One field of the health care workforce that is sometimes overlooked but no less important to the care team at hospitals and health systems is allied health technicians. They are essential, they are on the frontlines of patient care, and they are in high demand. **Based on current DEED data there are over 2,000 open jobs in the state for laboratory professionals, respiratory therapists, radiology technicians or surgical technicians, and that number is going to increase. Between now and the year 2030 DEED projects at least an additional 10,000 of total allied health job openings across the state.**

Solving the workforce shortage in health care is necessary and will uniquely require various approaches and investments in higher education. SF 1288 would begin the multi-year process to recruit a new cohort of allied health technicians by establishing a one-time scholarship program for students newly enrolled in an accredited program in Minnesota during the 2024-2025 academic school year. Each scholarship will total \$5,000 and the target is to award 1,000 scholarships to individuals pursuing a career as a laboratory professional, respiratory therapist, radiology technician or surgical technician. The proposed scholarship program is modeled after the successful Certified Nursing Assistant program currently underway at the Office of Higher Education and will build off the positive experience that Minnesota State has developed in marketing and administering that program.

Filling the many current opportunities for a career in health care in Minnesota requires personal and public investment in higher education. Student education costs are a real barrier but one that we know that scholarships help overcome.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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