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On behalf of the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing, we publically want to thank Senator Vitale for sponsoring this bill and for this Committee in hearing the bill today. With over a quarter of a million members of the nursing workforce delivering care to New Jersey residents, it is imperative that this bill be prioritized as it provides concrete actions to ensure we have recruited and retained a sufficient nursing workforce in New Jersey. In my 46 years of being a registered nurse I have never seen such an unstable work environment.

RECRUITMENT: We need to enroll more nursing students, and to do this we will need more faculty. In a poll we conducted in 2022, 93% of the BSN and higher programs, 68% of the ADN programs and 75% of the diploma programs cannot enroll more students. We know from our data that LPN programs are also struggling with faculty shortages. Creating this grant program will incentivize and assist in building the faculty workforce which in turn will assist in enrolling more students. Additionally, preceptor tax credits for those helping to educate our APN students would serve as an incentive to increase available preceptors.

RETENTION: Retention of nurses is important to stabilize the work environment. This includes 1) nurse residency programs, 2) Nursing Work Environment and Staffing Councils, and 3) mental health support.

- Providing funding for nurse residency programs across settings helps in retaining our new graduates. NJCCN has expertise in running nurse residency programs and has partnered over the last 3 years with the USDOL and the NJDOL to support programs in 14 of the 21 acute care hospitals. To date we have a 10% turnover as compared to the national turnover of 24%. This bill reallocates funding from licensure fees so we can expand these efforts with a specific target of nursing homes and home care where turnover is extremely high.
- This bill requires all hospitals to have a Nursing Work Environment and Staffing Council. This has been successfully implemented by ONL/NJ in 42 acute care hospitals. Requiring this with oversight by the NJDOH will strengthen nurses' voices in the workplace.
- In 2020, 64% of RNs reported burnout, 10% needed mental health intervention, and 37% intended to leave the hospital. NJ-Nursing and Emotional Well Being Institute (NJ-NEW) responded by offering mental health services for nurses through targeted strategies and financial support from foundations. This support is key to preventing and reducing PTSD and burnout in our nursing workforce. Funding is needed to keep this work moving forward.

DATA TRANSPARENCY: Transferring the regulation of CNAs from the Department of Health to the NJBON is the first step. Currently we do not have a mechanism in the state to collect data on CNAs. These workers are vital, especially in our nursing home environment. This bill would also require training programs of HHAs and CNAs to submit data to better understand barriers.

This bill would mandate data collection during license and certification renewal and data from schools & programs. This will help determine supply (educational capacity and workforce data) and demand of the nursing workforce.

FUNDING STABILITY: NJCCN's work is even more important today. We have been in existence since it was legislated in 2002 with funding provided through nursing licensure fees. With the nurse licensure compact, we need to stabilize our funding to ensure our efforts are not hampered. We must make efforts to recruit and retain the best nursing workforce to care for NJ residents. We thank you for your anticipated support of this bill.

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