



**Minnesota Hospital Association**

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Chair Youakim, Chair Pelowski and members of the Education Finance and Higher Education Finance and Policy Committees:

The Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA) strongly supports efforts to build the pipeline of health care workers and foster innovative partnerships between educational institutions and hospitals and health systems. Many of our members already invest in educational partnerships and welcome the opportunity to build on these existing efforts.

Recent MHA data shows the overall vacancy rate for hospital and health care system workers is a staggering 21%, compared with 6% in 2021. Given the health care workforce crisis, existing state programs such as the Dual Training Pipeline Program are critical to maintain and grow. The Dual Training Pipeline Program has helped hospitals, health systems, and other organizations throughout Minnesota set up “earn while you learn” programs, which provide tuition reimbursement to employers who pay for the cost of an employee’s education. The Office of Higher Education grants for health care have totaled over \$3.6 million since 2015, supporting more than 600 students. The earn and learn model helps students who otherwise would not pursue further education due to cost and lack of employer support, and participants report that the training is especially meaningful for their career advancement.

The state of Minnesota also invests \$300,000 annually in the Summer Health Care Internship Program, administered by MHA. This program reimburses half of a high-school or post-secondary summer intern’s wages, while students gain experience working in health care organizations and are exposed to health care careers. Participants include hospitals, health systems, long-term care facilities, community care providers, and other organizations.

In addition to state-funded programs, hospital and health systems also engage in other workforce development initiatives such as Scrubs Camps. These programs offer interactive activities for middle and high school students and expose students to health care careers. Additionally, many hospitals and health systems have relationships with local schools to facilitate student tours, shadowing opportunities, career education events, and volunteer opportunities. One example is the partnership to provide semester-long nursing assistant courses, allowing students to become eligible to take the certification exam.

We greatly appreciate the committee’s interest in this important topic, especially as it pertains to the health care workforce pipeline. Thank you for the consideration of our comments, and please let us know if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

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