WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18-2E-11A

§18-2E-11a. Nursing career pathway.

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) There are numerous reports relating that the nursing shortage is causing currently employed nurses to be overworked and that hospitals are bringing in travel nurses from other states;

(2) While the recent passage of the Advance Career Education and West Virginia Invests Grant programs legislation would address nursing shortages along with addressing other shortage areas, having a sufficient number of qualified nurses is of such importance to the health of the citizens of the state that additional efforts should be made to ensure that there is an adequate number of nurses to meet the state's health care needs as soon as possible; and

(3) Providing a seamless process for students pursuing careers in nursing from high school through attainment of a nursing credential or degree would assist in ensuring an adequate nursing workforce.

(b) The State Superintendent of Schools, the Chancellor for the Higher Education Policy Commission, and the Chancellor for the Community and Technical College System shall convene the West Virginia Nursing Career Pathway Workgroup consisting of:

(1) Representatives of health care providers that need nurses and could potentially provide clinical space. Due to the importance of health care providers providing clinical space, as many representatives of health care providers as possible, especially the largest health care providers, shall be invited to be members of the workgroup, provide input, and be encouraged to provide clinical space. Invitations to join the workgroup at least shall be extended to the West Virginia Health Care Association and the West Virginia Hospital Association;

(2) A representative of the West Virginia Department of Education;

(3) A representative of the Higher Education Policy Commission;

(4) A representative of the Council for Community and Technical College Education;

(5) Representatives of institutions of higher education in West Virginia;

(6) A representative of the Board for Registered Professional Nurses;

(7) A representative of the Board of Examiners for Licensed Practical Nurses; and

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(8) Any other persons that the State Superintendent, the Chancellor for Higher Education, and the Chancellor for Community and Technical College Education determine beneficial.

(c) The West Virginia Nursing Career Pathway Workgroup shall be charged with developing a career pathway to address the unmet need for nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and registered nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing. The nursing program of study will begin in high school and progress through college, providing employment opportunity with industry partners and pathway re-entry at specified student attainment points: Nursing assistant certification, licensed practical nurse diploma and licensure, registered nurse associate degree and licensure, and bachelor of science in nursing completion. The career pathway shall align affordable, effective, and sustainable secondary to post-secondary nursing programs to increase credential attainment for a broad and diverse student population.

(1) The career pathway shall include participating high school students enrolling in a specified curriculum of college preparatory, career and technical health science courses, or dual college-high school credit courses, as well as participating in career experiences through a health care provider or a work-based learning clinical experience.

(2) Students shall have the opportunity to apply for admission to a practical nursing program at a community and technical college or career and technical education center.

(3) Upon completion of a practical nursing program, students shall have the opportunity to apply for admission to a licensed practical nursing to registered nurse associate degree program.

(4) Upon completion of a licensed practical nursing to registered nurse associate degree program, students then shall have the opportunity to apply for admission to a registered nurse to bachelor of science in nursing program.

(5) The career pathway shall be made available to students statewide beginning with the cohort of students entering ninth grade during the 2021-2022 school year.

(d) The State Superintendent, the Chancellor for Higher Education, the Chancellor for Community and Technical College Education, or any combination thereof, shall report to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability, as requested, but at least annually, on the progress in implementing the career pathway up until such time as the career pathway is fully implemented statewide.

(e) In establishing the nursing career pathway, the State Superintendent, the Chancellor for Higher Education, the Chancellor of Community and Technical College Education, and the workgroup created pursuant to subsection (c) of this section shall consider the following:

(1) If the career pathway is difficult to implement due to nursing programs being at full capacity, the workgroup shall explore the use of online programs currently in existence or

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the creation of new online programs in overcoming any lack of capacity in the current nursing programs and to make programs more accessible to students; and

(2) The nursing career pathway shall include the use of any available financial assistance in order to minimize, or if possible, eliminate tuition costs for students and their families. This assistance can include, if a student is eligible, the Federal Pell Grant Program, the Higher Education Grant Program, the PROMISE Scholarship Program, the West Virginia Invests Grant Program, and any other grants or scholarships that might be available. Health care providers in need of nurses also shall be encouraged to establish scholarship programs to help cover tuition costs.

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