



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Health**



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Labor & Industry**



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**Department of Human Services**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, May 8, 2025**

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## **Shapiro Administration Calls for Strategic Investments in Recruiting and Retaining More Pennsylvania Nurses During National Student Nurse Day Event**

*Governor Shapiro's budget proposal makes strategic investments to strengthen the nursing workforce through tuition assistance, loan repayment, and apprenticeship opportunities.*

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Shapiro Administration is highlighting its efforts to recruit and retain more nurses in Pennsylvania today as part of National Student Nurse Day. **Departments of Health, Labor & Industry, and Human Services** leaders visited HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College, to promote [Governor Shapiro's proposed budget](#) that includes funding to strengthen the nursing workforce through tuition assistance, loan repayment and apprenticeship opportunities.

"Nurses are the backbone of our health care system," said **Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. "It is important that we celebrate the significant role Pennsylvania's institutions of higher learning play in preparing the next generation of nurses for this rewarding career. Governor Shapiro's budget proposal offers recruitment and retention incentives that would support more nurses entering the field."

Pennsylvania is facing a nursing shortage. According to a Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) [survey](#), Pennsylvania hospitals reported 14 percent of nursing positions are unfilled, leaving existing nurses stretched thin and working longer hours. The situation is projected to worsen, with the state expected to face a shortage of 20,000 nurses by 2026.

Offering incentives to nurses has proven a successful strategy for recruiting and retaining high-quality practitioners. The **Department of Health's [Primary Care Loan Repayment Program](#)** has accomplished this by financially assisting 219 health care professionals — physicians, nurses, dentists, nurse practitioners, and other health care providers throughout the Commonwealth — in the past two fiscal years. Seventy-eight of those health care professionals are currently working as nurses.

The Governor's budget proposal makes targeted investments to expand the health care workforce further, including nurses, ensuring communities have access to high-quality health care. The budget proposal includes **\$5 million** to expand the Primary Care Loan Repayment Program.

The Governor's budget proposal also includes a first-time state-level investment of **\$5 million** to create the **Nurse Shortage Assistance Program**, which will fund organizations that partner with hospitals and nursing schools to cover student loan costs for nursing students who commit to a three-year work placement at Pennsylvania hospitals after graduation. This initiative will build a pipeline of trained nursing professionals, boosting retention, limiting turnover, and helping maintain a skilled health care workforce that delivers high-quality care across the Commonwealth.

"The Shapiro Administration is committed to supporting the nurses of tomorrow, as well as the educational leaders guiding them along their journey, and we know the Governor's new proposed program will play a key role in strengthening Pennsylvania's nursing workforce and addressing the critical staff shortages," said **L&I Secretary Nancy A. Walker**. "With this proposed investment and the work underway at L&I to expand nursing and health care apprenticeship opportunities, we are taking the necessary steps to build strong nursing pipelines, so that Pennsylvanians in every community across our Commonwealth can have access to the quality health care they deserve."

Creating a pipeline of future nurses to fill the current and future void in the profession starts at Pennsylvania's nursing schools.

"As a registered nurse, I am proud to recognize the next generation of nursing students who soon will be working in our communities and caring for our friends, neighbors, loved ones, and even for many of us," said **DHS Office of Medical Assistance Programs Deputy Secretary Sally Kozak**. "Nurses are a vital part of our health care infrastructure, and these careers allow people to make incredibly positive impacts in the lives of people they care for while also providing invaluable experience that they can build on through their practice or in careers in public health and public policy. The Shapiro Administration is committed to strengthening our health care systems and supporting health care professionals across the Commonwealth — a recognition of the investment nurses and other health care professionals make in all of us."

"As the largest provider of nursing education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the HACC community is proud to highlight Governor Shapiro's commitment to growing

Pennsylvania's nursing workforce," said **HACC President Dr. John J. 'Ski' Sygielski**. "We are doing incredible work preparing the next generation of nurses through hands-on training, cutting-edge simulation labs, and a deep commitment to student success. We are building a strong and compassionate health care workforce for Pennsylvania."

**Governor Shapiro's** 2025-26 proposed budget further invests in Pennsylvania's health care workforce by addressing critical shortages and expanding access to care, including:

- **\$5 million** to expand the Primary Care Loan Repayment Program at the **Pennsylvania Department of Health**, offering loan repayment for physicians, nurses, dentists, and psychologists who commit to working in designated Health Professional Shortage Areas like rural communities.
- **\$10 million** to expand behavioral health loan repayment programs, ensuring providers are available statewide – including in rural communities – to meet the growing demand for mental health care and address a critical workforce shortage.
- **\$5 million** to educate, train, and recruit nursing professionals through loan repayment, ensuring a steady pipeline of highly trained professionals in Pennsylvania hospitals.
- **Legislation to grant** full practice authority to nurse practitioners who have worked under a physician for three years, increasing access to care in underserved communities.
- **Enhancing postpartum depression screening** and intervention efforts to ensure equitable access to maternal health care.

The Governor's proposal builds on his Administration's commitment to workforce development and previous investments to support health care access across the Commonwealth. By making strategic investments in key industries like health care, child care, and direct care, the Shapiro Administration is tackling workforce shortages that impact Pennsylvania families and economic growth.

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**Editor's Note:** Video downloads and photos from the news conference at Harrisburg Area Community College are [available on PAcast](#).