



February 23, 2021

*Wayne A. Smith  
President & CEO*

The Honorable William J. Carson  
Chair, Joint Finance Committee  
411 Legislative Avenue  
Dover, DE 19901

The Honorable Trey Paradee  
Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee  
411 Legislative Avenue  
Dover, DE 19901

**RE: Support for Funding for the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program**

*Alfred I. duPont Hospital  
for Children*

Mark Mumford,  
Executive Vice President  
Chief Executive,  
Nemours Delaware  
Valley Operations

*Bayhealth*

Terry Murphy,  
President & CEO

*Beebe Healthcare*

David A. Tam,  
MD, MBA,  
President & CEO

*ChristianaCare*

Janice E. Nevin,  
MD, MPH  
President & CEO

*TidalHealth Nanticoke*

Penny Short, MSM, BSN,  
RN  
President & CEO

*Saint Francis Healthcare*

Brandon S. Harvath,  
President & COO

*Wilmington Veterans*

*Affairs Medical Center*  
Vincent Kane  
Director

*Delaware Healthcare*

*Association*  
Wayne A. Smith  
President & CEO

Dear Representative Carson, Senator Paradee and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today on the Governor's recommended budget for the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). The Delaware Healthcare Association, on behalf of Delaware's hospitals and health care delivery systems, strongly supports inclusion of funding for the new Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget.

Primary care is critical to healthier communities, but there is a national primary care shortage. In Delaware, our population is increasing while the number of primary care health care providers has decreased. There are not enough primary care health care providers in rural and low-income areas in our State. For this reason, the new Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program is needed to bring more primary care providers to Delaware and meet the health needs of all Delawareans.

The Health Care Provider Loan Repayment program outlined in House Bill 48, introduced by Rep. David Bentz, and included in the Governor's recommended budget would establish a financial incentive to attract more primary care providers to Delaware. The program would provide up to \$50,000 a year of medical education debt relief for up to four years for primary care providers that locate in Delaware in underserved areas or areas of need. The funding would be established through a public-private partnership with as much as \$1 million funded by the State and a matching amount provided by health insurers. In addition, Delaware hospitals would match any grants to primary care providers employed at hospitals on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

While the Governor's recommended budget includes \$500,000 for this important program, we urge the Joint Finance Committee to fund the program at the full \$1 million level originally requested, doubling the impact and access to primary care providers in our state House Bill 48 would provide.

In addition to the Delaware Healthcare Association, the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program (HB 48) is supported by Westside Family Healthcare, La Red Health Center, Henrietta Johnson Medical Center, the Delaware Health Care Commission, Delaware

Academy of Medicine, Medical Society of Delaware, Highmark of Delaware, and the Delaware Commissioner of Insurance.

The Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program is critical to the health of our state and we urge that it be funded to the fullest extent possible. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wayne A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" at the end.

Wayne A. Smith  
President & CEO

CC: Members of the Joint Finance Committee