**Program Helping to Reduce Student Loan Debt for Maryland Nurses Pursuing a Doctoral Degree**

Baltimore, Maryland – (April 6, 2023) –The Maryland Higher Education Commission recently awarded $293,914 to seven Maryland nursing faculty members in an ongoing effort to increase the number of doctoral prepared nurse faculty in Maryland.

The seven nursing faculty are employed at five nursing programs across Maryland and were awarded the Nurse Educator Doctoral Grant for practice and dissertation research. The recipients will receive awards between $12,800 and $60,000 to expedite the completion of their terminal degree and reduce existing student loan debt.

While 19.3% of nurses hold a graduate degree, less than 2% have a doctoral degree. Nurses with doctorates are needed to teach future generations of nurses and to conduct research that becomes the basis for improvements in nursing science and practice. Research shows a critical need for an increase in highly educated nurses and an improved education system to address the nursing shortage expected to impact the state by 2025 through implementation of the following goals:

* Increase the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree to 80%;
* Double the number of nurses with a doctorate;
* Ensure that nurses engage in lifelong learning; and
* Build an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of inter-professional data.

The deans and directors of nursing programs at two Maryland universities and three Maryland community colleges recognized and nominated nurse faculty for the awards.

* Howard Community College- 1 award
* Prince George’s Community College- 1 award
* Montgomery College- 1 award
* University of Maryland, Baltimore- 3 awards
* Washington Adventist University- 1 award

The annual process was instituted in 2012, with new nominations due every September. The program is recognized as effective in the retention of new nurse faculty. The findings of the most recent program evaluation indicate nine out of ten nursing faculty who received the Nurse Educator Doctoral Grant remained employed full time at a Maryland nursing program.

The Fiscal Year 2023 Nurse Support Program II grants were awarded by the Maryland Higher Education Commission, administrator for the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission.