



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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**In Wayne County, Governor Shapiro and Health Secretary Dr. Bogen
Launch New Nurse Shortage Assistance Program to Support Aspiring
Nurses, Address Gaps in Pennsylvania's Workforce**

Pennsylvania hospitals have reported that an average of 15 percent of their licensed nursing positions are vacant, risking a shortage of 22,000 nurses by 2028.

The Shapiro Administration created the state-level Nurse Shortage Assistance Program to build a pipeline of trained nursing professionals to deliver high-quality care all across the Commonwealth.



Honesdale, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** and **Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen** visited Wayne Memorial Hospital — part of the Wayne Memorial Health System (WMHS) — to officially launch the state-level [**Nurse Shortage Assistance Program \(NSAP\)**](#) to help boost retention, limit turnover, and maintain a skilled health care workforce.

Secured by the Governor in the [2026-27 budget](#), **\$5 million** in loan repayment assistance funding will be distributed to NSAP recipients through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) and servicer, Scholars Network. In the program's first year, up to 200 nursing students could receive up to \$10,000 per year, building a pipeline of trained nursing professionals who deliver high-quality care all across the Commonwealth.

“By expanding education programs, providing tuition assistance, and connecting nursing students with hospitals, we can ensure there are enough skilled professionals in our communities to deliver high-quality patient care,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “Investing in Pennsylvania’s nursing students not only gives them peace of mind that they’ll have a

good job after college but it creates a pipeline of new, highly trained nurses for our communities to directly address the Commonwealth's nursing shortage. My Administration is committed to continuing support for this critical workforce and helping the nurses who care for Pennsylvanians."

According to a Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania [report](#), Pennsylvania hospitals reported that an average of 15 percent of their licensed nursing positions are vacant, leaving existing nurses stretched thin and working longer hours. By 2028, the situation is projected to worsen with the Commonwealth expected to face a shortage of 22,000 nurses.

"Investing in our nursing workforce is one of the most effective ways to protect public health and expand care in every corner of Pennsylvania," said **Health Secretary Dr. Bebra Bogen**. "The Nurse Shortage Assistance Program will bring top-tier talent to communities across the state and give dedicated professionals a reason to stay long-term."

Eligible recipients must be pursuing a nursing degree and commit to a three-year work placement at a partnering Pennsylvania hospital after graduation. Hospitals who participate in NSAP must also commit employer matching funds equal to at least 100 percent of the requested state funding, resulting in a potential loan repayment of \$20,000 per year for nurses.

"We're grateful to Governor Shapiro for recognizing that building the future nursing workforce requires early investment in students and stronger connections between education and employment," said **Sam Maron, Founder, Scholars Network**. "Scholars Network helps students develop relationships with healthcare employers long before graduation, creating clearer pathways into nursing careers while helping health systems like Guthrie recruit and retain talent in the communities they serve."

WMHS serves over 100,000 residents annually across Wayne and Pike counties and the surrounding areas, offering a wide array of health care services designed to meet evolving local needs. Despite this demand for care, Wayne Memorial Hospital has reported a 25 percent vacancy rate across its full and part-time Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse positions. By enrolling in NSAP and partnering with universities, WMHS could receive help in filling these vacant positions, increase support for current nurses, and further strengthen care delivery.

"A few years ago, Governor Shapiro told me about his dedication to committing resources to finding solutions that preserve our healthcare in rural Pennsylvania," said **James Pettinato, CEO, WMHS**. "Through his efforts, we continue to have conversations with the state government and while nursing resources remain in a shortfall, we appreciate the help the state has given us — approving compact participation and now, the Nursing Shortage Assistance Program will add to that help, providing tuition assistance for aspiring nurses."

"The nursing shortage is a serious national and local challenge that affects patients, families, and healthcare organizations across the country. There's no single cause and

no quick fix,” said **Chandra Roberts, Chief Nursing and Patient Care Services Officer, WMHS**. “Our response must include expanding nursing education and clinical placements, supporting students and faculty, improving workforce safety, and investing in competitive pay, mentorship, and mental health support. The Nurse Shortage Assistance Program would help provide these services and more — and would aim to bring an additional number of talented, skilled nurse professionals to the Honesdale area.”

Jamie Wagner, a participant in the NSAP pilot, also joined **Governor Shapiro** at Wayne Memorial today to share how this new initiative changed her life, allowing her to pursue a dream career in nursing without the weight of massive student debt. After learning about the program through her local nursing leadership in Bradford County, Wagner was able to go back to school and become a registered nurse in 2025. She is currently receiving loan repayment in exchange for her continued commitment to the Guthrie Health System and is on track to have her student loans fully repaid as of December 2027.

“I’m incredibly grateful for the Nurse Shortage Assistance Program because it helped make my goal of becoming an RN a reality, and gave me the opportunity to advance my career at Guthrie,” said **Wagner**. “Knowing I would have loan repayment support allowed me to focus on becoming the best nurse I could be — instead of the financial burden I would face upon graduation. Now, as the program expands, more aspiring nurses will have that same burden eased, making it possible for them to pursue their careers with greater peace of mind. At a time when there simply aren’t enough nurses to meet the demand, programs like this are so important, especially in rural areas.”

Shapiro Administration’s Progress to Fill Critical Shortages in Pennsylvania’s Nursing and Health Care Workforce

Today’s announcement takes another step toward addressing the Commonwealth’s workforce shortage and builds on three and a half years of progress under **Governor Shapiro**. Since taking office, the Shapiro Administration has worked to attract more nurses and health care professionals to Pennsylvania’s workforce by:

- **Implementing Health Care Licensure Compacts:** Allowed doctors and nurses with a multistate license in **more than 40 other states** and physical therapists in **more than 30 others states** to practice in Pennsylvania, increasing access to care.
- **Limiting Non-Compete Clauses:** Signed by the Governor, the [Fair Contracting for Health Care Practitioners Act](#) limits noncompete clauses for doctors, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and physician assistants while helping to ensure Pennsylvanians continue to receive care from their trusted providers.
- **Speeding Up Government:** Reduced the time it takes to receive licenses, permits, and certifications in the Commonwealth. Between 2023 and 2025, license processing times dropped **from 20 days to 4 days** for pharmacists, **43 days to 5 days** for doctors, and **25 days to 6 days** for nurses.

- **Investing in the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Workforce:**
Awarded **over \$40 million** through the Substance Use Disorder Loan Repayment Program to assist nearly 590 professionals within the SUD treatment, prevention, case management, and recovery support services workforce by providing aid to help repay outstanding educational loans.

Through the new [Nurse Shortage Assistance Program](#), **Governor Shapiro** is doubling down on his commitment to filling gaps in Pennsylvania's workforce and supporting the professionals who deliver high-quality care all across the Commonwealth.

Read more about the [2026-27 budget](#), view the Governor's [remarks as prepared](#), or watch the Governor's delivered remarks [here](#).

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