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State Rep. Esther Helton-Haynes passes legislation protecting financial aid eligibility for nursing students

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee House of Representatives this week unanimously passed legislation filed by **State Rep. Esther Helton-Haynes**, R-East Ridge, that will ensure students in licensed practical nursing (LPN) programs can still qualify for federal financial aid assistance.

[House Bill 2378](#) requires the Tennessee Board of Nursing to set a minimum of 1,296 clock hours, or an equivalent number of credit hours, for practical nursing programs offered at public institutions of higher education in the state. A minimum of 980 hours is currently required.

Beginning July 1, colleges that offer LPN programs longer than the minimum set by state law or regulatory board will no longer qualify for federal financial aid. House Bill 2378 will ensure students enrolled in the Tennessee Board of Regents' (TBR) LPN programs, which exceed the current state minimum requirement, remain eligible to receive financial assistance.

“It is essential that Tennesseans have opportunities to pursue a career in health care here at home,” Helton-Haynes said. “This legislation will ensure students can continue to afford attending one of the many LPN programs offered across our state. This will not only benefit them professionally, but it will improve overall health care in Tennessee.”

Private institutions would still be able to maintain their current curriculum lengths in accordance with the Board of Nursing's rules, according to the legislation.

The Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT), which is operated by the TBR, is the single largest provider of LPNs in the state. There were 1,186 new LPNs that graduated statewide during the 2022-23 academic year.

In 2021, Tennessee faced a shortfall of 15,700 registered nurses, [according](#) to a report from the Tennessee Hospital Association. The shortage is expected to lead to increased demand for LPNs statewide.

House Bill 2378 was unanimously approved by the House chamber on April 8. The companion version of the legislation is still advancing in the Senate.

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