



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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January 1, 2025

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
 Governor of the State of Washington  
 Post Office Box 40002  
 Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

[RCW 18.88A.087](#) requires the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) and the Department of Health (department) to recognize alternative (bridge) training options for Home Care Aides (HCAs) and Medical Assistants (MAs) to qualify for the Nursing Assistant-Certified (NA-C) credential. It requires the Secretary of Health, in consultation with WABON, to report annually to the governor and legislature on progress made to advance certified HCAs and MAs into nursing assistant practice.

WABON adopted curriculum and minimum education and training requirements for bridge training programs for HCAs and MAs in 2011. WABON also created processes to approve and deny bridge training programs and to allow bridge training program graduates to take the competency evaluation (test) and apply for an NA-C credential. These requirements are currently found in [WAC 246-841A](#)-530 through -585.

WABON approved the first two programs for bridge training in October 2012. As of September 2024, there are 26 approved bridge training programs distributed as follows:

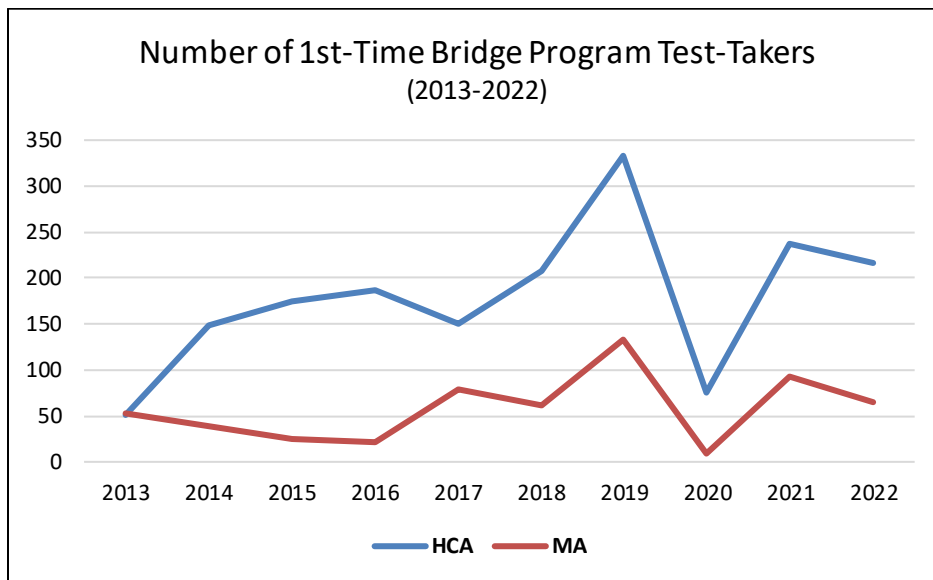
Program Type	Total # of Programs	# in Western WA	# in Eastern WA
HCA Bridge	18	13	5
MA Bridge	7	5	2
<b>Combined Bridge</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>

Since July 1, 2012, the department has issued 2,115 NA-C credentials for applicants who have completed bridge training programs. As of July 2023, 4 additional applications from individuals who have completed a bridge training program are awaiting approval.

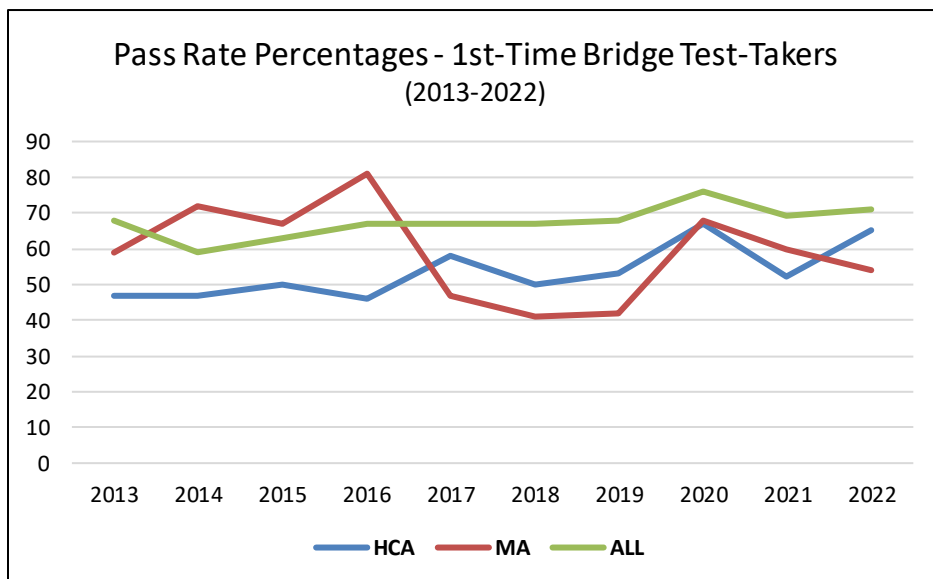
The charts below display the number of first-time test takers for each type of bridge program and the percentage passing both parts of the test (written and skills) on their first attempt from 2013 to 2022 to show historical data. **Due to changes in our process for receiving testing data, we will not be able to present the 2023 data on the number of first-time bridge program test takers or their pass rate**

percentages in the same manner. Additional tables and graphs illustrate the differences in individual written and skills exam data between 2022 and 2023 for first time test takers.

**Historic Trends (2013-2022)**



The number of HCA and MA test-takers dropped in 2020 due to testing closures during the pandemic, but 2021 showed growth toward recovery. The 2022 volumes decreased as a reflection of the need for greater access to skills testing (the graph includes only those who have taken both the written and the skills exams).



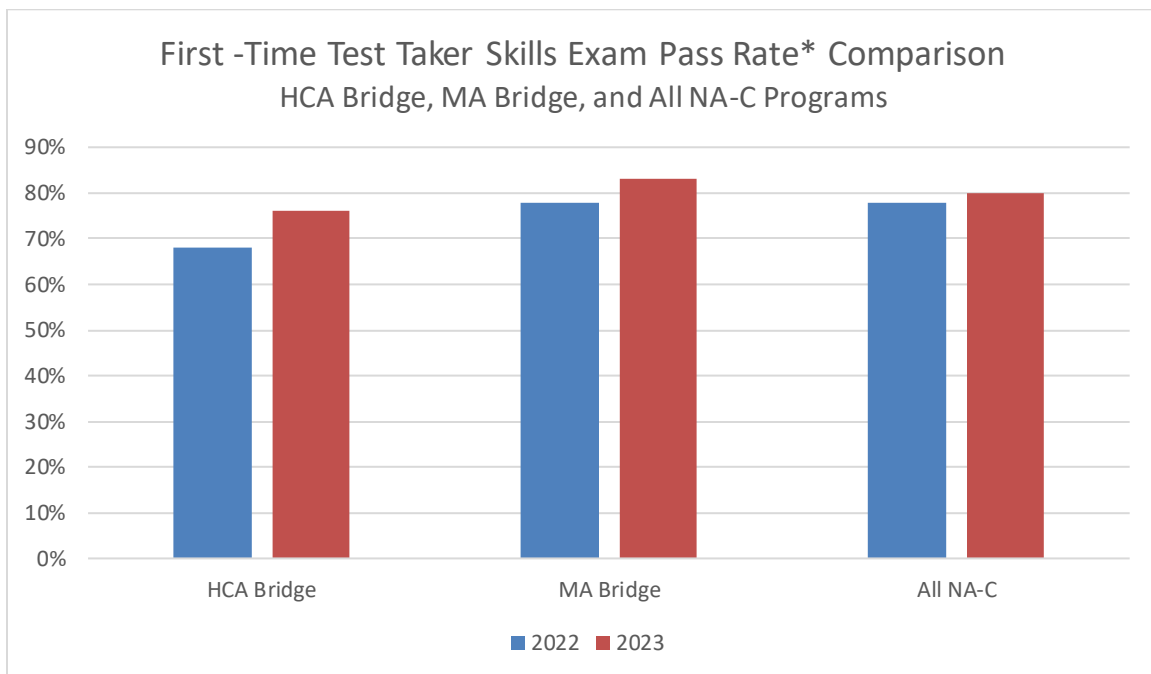
The 2022 statutory change to remove the cap of 24 hours for training had a positive impact in testing data. Fluctuations in MA bridge pass rates likely reflect skew due to small numbers of test-takers. Pass rate increases in 2020 for all test-takers also may be impacted by the small number of test-takers during the pandemic.

## Exam Volumes and Pass Rates (2023)

The below charts display the number of first-time test takers for each type of bridge program and the percentage of test takers passing the skills exam and written exam on their first attempt from 2022 to 2023. **WABON does not have separate data for the written and skills tests from prior years due to a change in the testing vendor in January 2022.**

### Number of First-Time Test Takers: Skills Exam 2022-2023

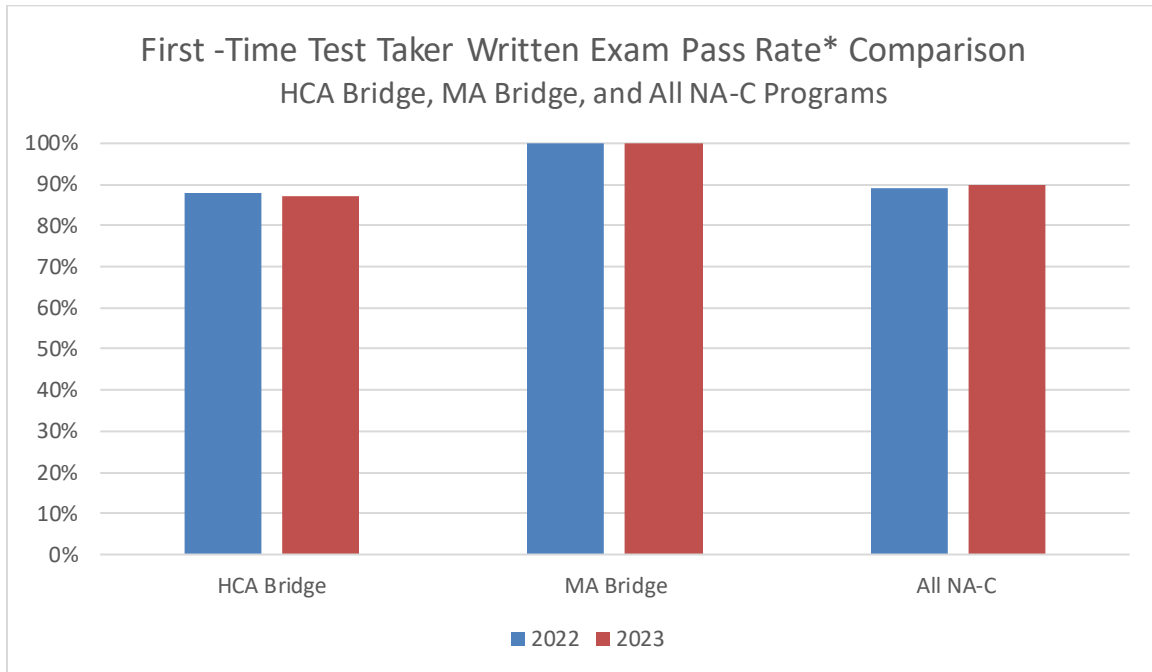
Program Type	<u>2022</u> # Passed/# Tested	<u>2023</u> # Passed/# Tested
HCA Bridge	393/572	686/902
MA Bridge	18/23	15/18
All NA-C	4890/6250	7118/8913



In October 2023, WABON fully assumed responsibility for the skills exam which allowed training programs to use their Registered Nurse (RN) directors or instructors to evaluate their own students for skills testing (versus a third-party skills testing company). The goal of this pilot program was to increase skills testing availability, increasing testing volumes and streamlining the process to encourage rapid entry into the workforce. This change accounts for the 42.6% increase in the number of test takers between 2022 and 2023. Similarly, students testing in their training environment demonstrated a 5% increase in pass rates for bridge programs and a 2% increase for all NA-C skills exam test takers. The increase is attributed to increased confidence in the testing environment and testing more quickly after completion of the training program.

## Number of First-Time Test Takers: Written Exam 2022-2023

Program Type	<u>2022</u> # Passed/# Tested	<u>2023</u> # Passed/# Tested
<b>HCA Bridge</b>	561/637	735/841
<b>MA Bridge</b>	23/23	26/26
<b>All NA-C</b>	5470/6160	6920/7660



Written exam pass rates show only minor changes, attributed to normal variation, as the availability and delivery of the written exam remained consistent through 2023.

### **Continued Process Improvement**

WAC Chapter 246-841A was published in October 2023, mandating that all nursing assistant training programs adhere to a new common curriculum starting in September 2024. This revised curriculum includes updated content and training hours designed to support improved pass rates and preparation for the work environment. Prospective evaluation of the new curriculum is planned following implementation.

Following the October 2023 skills exam pilot, WABON has continued to refine processes and has gathered valuable feedback from interested parties to further improve efficiencies with the skills exam.

In October 2024, WABON will pilot a new approach where students will be required to pass the skills exam within their program prior to program completion. Pilot programs will be responsible for evaluating and grading their own students. WABON is currently developing rules for the NA-C Skills exam based on this new pilot, aiming to further reduce barriers for students seeking certification after completing their training programs.

For questions about this report, please contact Reuben Argel, Director of Nursing Assistant Programs, at [reuben.argel@doh.wa.gov](mailto:reuben.argel@doh.wa.gov) or 360-819-0967.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sasha De Leon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sasha De Leon, MA, MSPH, MS  
Assistant Secretary  
Health Systems Quality Assurance

cc: The Honorable Annette Cleveland, Senate Health Care Committee  
The Honorable Marcus Riccelli, House Health Care and Wellness Committee  
Amber Leaders, Governor's Policy Office  
Megan Veith, Department of Health  
Alison Bradywood, Washington State Board of Nursing  
Reuben Argel, Washington State Board of Nursing  
Anthony Partridge, Washington State Board of Nursing