



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 328 - Funding for Wages and Benefits for Nursing Home Workers
(Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Funding Act of 2024)
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
January 22, 2024**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 328. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Our healthcare system is in crisis. Nursing homes suffer from staff shortages that prevent them from providing the level of care that our state deserves. SB 328 fixes this problem by implementing a wage passthrough to raise nursing home worker wages and increase oversight of nursing homes by Maryland's Department of Health.

The pandemic pushed our healthcare workforce to the brink and many left the industry to find employment in higher paying, less demanding jobs. Despite taking care of our most vulnerable, direct care workers are underpaid and overworked. SB 328 follows the lead of 21 other states by implementing a wage pass through for direct care workers using Maryland's Medical Assistance Program.¹

In order to prevent this money from being used to increase company profits or compensate executives, 75% of the rate increase funding must be used to increase the salaries of healthcare workers, nursing home staff that provide direct care, and nursing home support staff like housekeeping, laundry, nutritional, and activity planners. This ensures that funding goes to the lowest paid workers. This is also an issue of racial equity. Maryland's direct care workforce is 87% people of color.²

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 328.

¹ McKnight Long Term Care News. "Nearly half of states now using Medicaid to boost direct-care pay." November 4, 2022.

² PHI. "The Direct Services Workforce in LTSS in MD and DC." September 2018.