

BILL NO: House Bill 189
TITLE: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Personal Care Aides – Wages Reports
COMMITTEE: Finance
HEARING DATE: March 20, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 189 seeks to require home care agencies that receive Medicaid funds to provide basic data to the state regarding the wages paid to Maryland home care workers and will lay the groundwork to address the shortage of home care workers and the low wages currently earned by home care workers in Maryland.

Maryland currently lacks hard data regarding home care workers' pay rates because most of this workforce is funded by Medicaid and Maryland has not conducted a Medicaid reimbursement rate study for home and community-based services since 2018. HB189 will require Medicaid reimbursement rate studies every two years and will require these studies to include data regarding the average, highest and lowest wages paid to home care workers, as well as data regarding the cost of ensuring that home care workers are paid at least 50% more than the minimum wage.

The data that HB 189 would require will allow policymakers and the Maryland Department of Health to have the information needed to ensure that reimbursement rates are adequate to allow providers to pay competitive wages. This is significant as Maryland ranks 49th out of 50 states in the difference between home care workers' actual wages and what is needed to attract and retain enough workers while paying workers enough to live, according to June 2022 study by the Economic Policy Institute and New America. This is a particularly acute burden for women, and women of color in particular, who represent a disproportionate percentage of personal care aides.

HB 189 seeks to address the shortage of home care workers and to accurately document the abysmal wages those employees currently earn, which will in turn will support Maryland families and will support the continued economic security for women in Maryland. As such, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on House Bill 189.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.