

Testimony for SB 197

Homecare Workers Rights Act of 2024

Position: FAV

Dear Chair Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Wendy (I go by Nadirah) and I live in Baltimore City. I have been a home care aid on and off for 30 years now. I love my job because I believe that care is what keeps this world afloat. Since I was twelve years old when I started watching my mom and ever since then I knew that caregiving is my calling.

I am here today because just last month, I realized that my boss at the agency I work for has classified me as a 1099 “self employed” worker. I recently got into serious car accident that has left me with limited mobility and PTSD, but I do not have health insurance through my job nor do I have sick leave. I had no idea that for the past 5 years I could have had these benefits if I had not been misclassified by my employer. I am here to protect the thousands of other home care workers in the state working for residential service agencies working underpaid and without the benefits they deserve and, like me, may not even know.

For too long, home care workers have been invisible to society as we travel to people’s homes ensuring they can do their daily tasks safely and with support. I am here today to fight for home care workers in the state but also for my patients who deserve consistent caregivers. Because of low pay, I have colleagues jumping between agencies or sometimes leaving the field entirely to earn more in another industry.

I do this work because providing care is personal to me, but I am underpaid and burnt out trying to make ends meet for me and my family. The work that I do is emotional labor, but it also directly impacts my physical health as I go into people’s homes during this pandemic and when the condition of people's homes are unsafe. I had a brain tumor and survived a stroke. I suffered paralysis and when I could not walk, talk, or barely eat, I relied on a friend to care for me. Will the legislature wait until you or your loved ones experiences a health decline to invest in our care infrastructure? And by then, will it be too late?

Caregivers are the backbone of this economy. It’s long overdue for the state to invest in us care workers, and ensure our rights are protected. Because care can’t wait, I urge you to issue a favorable report on SB 197.

Sincerely,

Wendy (Nadirah) Wiley

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