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Health and Government Operations
Committee
Subcommittees

Health Occupations and Long Term Care
Public Health and Minority
Health Disparities

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB189 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides - Reimbursement and Wage Reports (Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024)

January 24, 2024

Thank you Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. I am Delegate Robbyn Lewis, testifying today on behalf of HB189. Homecare workers, also called Personal Care Workers, or Personal Care Assistants, are the backbone of our health delivery system, and yet, they are in short supply. This bill will improve hiring, retention and effective deployment of this vitally important, but heretofore ignored cadre.

The bill concerns the Maryland Department of Labor (DOL) and personal care agencies, which are entities reimbursed by DOL under a Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services Program.

The bill works on the principle that what gets measured, matters.

First, wage transparency: provider agencies must report annually to the DOL the wage rates they are paying to homecare workers they employ.

Secondly, programmatic accountability: DOL must analyze wage reports, determine the costs of services provided under the specified programs, and then develop a plan to close any gap between wages and costs. Every two years, DOL must then report recommendations to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health & Government Operations Committee.

The bill also requires DOL to examine other factors, such as licensure requirements, coordination of care and other matters that affect service delivery by homecare workers.

Ultimately, House Bill 189 strengthens the State's commitment to plan, anticipate and allocate resources towards the needs of homecare services. By putting homecare workers first, this bill

will bolster employment in the home care industry, enable more livable wages and ultimately, improve health care outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robbyn Lewis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Robbyn Lewis