

NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

Comments in Support of HB189 Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides – Reimbursement and Wage Reports

January 20, 2024

Submitted via:

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/MyMGATracking/WitnessSignup>

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (“NDWA”) submits this testimony in support of HB189/SB 371 the Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024.

My name is Allison Yunda and I am the Maryland Lead Organizer for the National Domestic Workers Alliance, otherwise known as NDWA. NDWA is the leading voice for the estimated 2.2 million domestic workers who work as direct care workers, nannies, and house cleaners in private homes providing essential care and supportive services to children, aging adults, and family members with disabilities every day. While the National Domestic Workers Alliance is a national organization, our DMV chapter is a locally operated, membership-based organization covering the geographical area of Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia and is staffed by several local organizers.

Over 127,000 residents of Maryland need help with daily activities such as bathing or dressing.¹ In Maryland, the number of older adults was predicted to grow by 75 percent in the 30-year period from 2015 to 2045 – from 837,500 to nearly 1.5 million.² With anticipated separations and growth, research anticipates 37,000 job openings in the state for personal care aides, by 2028.

Although the number of direct care workers more than doubled from 2.2 million in 2000 to 5.1 million in 2022, the supply of direct care workers will fall short of the demand associated with 8.9 million projected job openings from 2022-2032. By requiring that home care agencies that receive Medicaid reimbursement report to the Maryland Department of Labor the rates they pay home care workers, Maryland can take action to ensure that workers receive competitive wages, helping attract

¹ Paul, Rafal, & Houtenville. 2020. Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2020 (Table 1.8). University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability, available at: https://disabilitycompendium.org/sites/default/files/user-uploads/Events/2021_release_year/Final%20Accessibility%20Compendium%202020%20PDF_2.1.2020reduced.pdf

² Id.

and retain the workforce Maryland needs.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has also recognized that the shortage of direct care workers jeopardizes access to services, and acknowledges that the sufficiency of reimbursement rates as well as wages is necessary to ensure access to care.

Given that Maryland last did a Medicaid reimbursement rate study for home- and community-based services in 2018, this bill is needed more than ever. The Homecare Worker Employment Act of 2024 would allow Maryland to jumpstart improvement of their own processes by requiring rate studies every two years, with reports to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee. The rate study will involve interviews with key stakeholders, including providers, and will also examine the cost of ensuring that workers are paid at least 50% more than minimum wage (i.e., \$22.50/hour). These provisions are very similar to those recently passed in New Mexico, as well as the policies of many other states such as Arizona, Maine, Texas, and Indiana³.

Despite the increasing demand and essential nature of home care, the caregiving work of personal care aides is still not valued- workers receive extremely low pay, few benefits and enjoy limited protections. Improving the working conditions for home care workers is critical to address staffing shortages and meet the growing demand for this essential work in Maryland. Data will enable policymakers to make sound decisions to stabilize the workforce in order to ensure both access and better quality of care.

Sincerely,

Allison Yunda
Maryland Lead Organizer
DMV Chapter
National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)
ayunda@domesticworkers.org

Reena Arora, Esq.
Director of Care Policy

NDWA
reena@domesticworkers.org