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MAYOR

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HB0189

March 20, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides - Reimbursement and Wage Reports (Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 189.

HB 189 requires providers under several Medicaid-funded home and community-based programs to submit annual reports to the Maryland Department of Labor documenting wages paid to employees who provide personal care services. The bill directs the Maryland Department of Health to report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee on the final federal "Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services" rule and plans or steps that the Department will take to operationalize the rule, including 1) the process that the Department will use to review wage reports of personal care aides and 2) how the data will be used to review Medicaid reimbursement rates as outlined in the rule.

Maryland is home to nearly 1.4 million adults ages 60 and older.ⁱ Personal care workers in Medicaid home and community-based programs are essential to supporting older adults and persons with disabilities as they seek to remain in their homes and communities, rather than move to an assisted living facility. However, the state annual mean wage of home health and personal care aides is just \$32,590, and many of these workers must work multiple jobs to make ends meet.ⁱⁱ According to data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Maryland ranks below 40 other states for our number of home health workers per 1,000 residents, meaning we are not doing enough to attract and retain people to work in this essential field.ⁱⁱⁱ HB 189 takes important step towards addressing the need to provide adequate pay for these essential workers and assuring that Medicaid supports adequate pay for them.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on HB 189.

ⁱ Maryland Department of Aging. (2021). State Plan on Aging, 2022-2025. Retrieved from <https://aging.maryland.gov/SiteAssets/Pages/StatePlanonAging/MD%20State%20Plan%202022-2025.pdf>

ⁱⁱ US Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics - Home Health and Personal Care Aides. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes311120.htm#st>

ⁱⁱⁱ United Health Foundation. (2024). Home Health Care Workers in Maryland. Retrieved from https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/home_health_care_sr_b/MD