



## Testimony in support of HB 189

### Homecare Worker Employment Act of 2024

Dear Chair Pena-Melynk and members of the Health, Government, and Operations committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. 1199 SEIU supports HB 189 because we believe the state needs to lay the foundation for collecting and analyzing data for the home care workforce that can bolster wages and job quality.

**Fair pay for personal care aides is a race equity and gender equity issue.** PCAs are about 90% women and 70% are Black. Nearly 1 in 10 personal care aides live in poverty in the state. Higher wages means personal care aides are relying less on public assistance, improve quality care, and attract more people to stay in the field. **1199 SEIU is at the forefront of navigating a dire shortage of healthcare workers across hospitals and long term care.** We know that the demand for home care is increasing as Maryland's population of those 65 and older will exponentially increase. In order to meet the need adequately, Maryland will need 40 percent more care workers over the next 10 years<sup>1</sup>.

**HB 189 sets the groundwork to invest in Maryland's long term care system with fair Medicaid reimbursement rates for agencies and higher wages for workers.** Because state Medicaid agencies set reimbursement rates and pay for many of these workers, states have the opportunity and responsibility to improve outcomes for home care workers and the families they serve by ensuring that the home health care workforce is supported by family sustaining wages.

**1199 SEIU also supports HB 189 because it addresses the lack of adequate data and transparency about Maryland's home care workers.** Maryland Department of Labor will collect basic information on wages of the home care workforce that can inform future rate and wage increases in Maryland. 1199 SEIU supports the recommendations from the Commission to Study the Healthcare Workforce Crisis and believes HB 189 is an important step towards improving data on the home care workforce.

Because care can't wait and for the reasons above, we request a **favorable** report on HB 189 Please reach out to Ricarra Jones at [ricarra.jones@1199.org](mailto:ricarra.jones@1199.org) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones

Political Director | 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East