



Comments in Support of HB1142

Public Health– Maryland Interested Parties Advisory Group– Establishment

Health and Government Operations

March 25, 2025

Hello, my name is Monique Lynch, and I've been a direct care worker for six years. I got into caregiving by accident—my friend ran an assisted living facility, and I was just supposed to help with paperwork. But I quickly fell in love working hands-on with residents. I've always had a passion for caregiving, especially because I've been caring for my 22-year-old brother with special needs who still lives at home with my family.

While I have worked in facilities before, I am doing home care now. What I love most about my job is spending time with seniors and hearing their life stories. My favorite part of my job is building relationships with my patients and learning from their experiences. I've worked with children before, but my calling and fulfillment comes from working with seniors.

I've seen firsthand how working conditions affect the quality of care for my patients. Because home care is a one-on-one setting, I am able to build stronger bonds with my patients and give them the attention and care that they deserve. Facilities are often understaffed which affects the type of care patients receive.

However, being a home care worker comes with its challenges. The pay is not enough to live on, and job security is always uncertain. Whenever a patient is hospitalized, when they pass away, or when they lose coverage of their insurance, we are left without a job and no means of paying our bills. I often juggle multiple cases and work six days a week, sometimes working two jobs just to make ends meet.

Higher wages, and better benefits for me would mean that I could afford my own place and get a car. These are basic necessities that home care workers should be able to afford considering the love and time we put into our patients, and how essential our jobs are to society. Because of us, family members are able to go out and work while knowing their loved ones are being taken care of.

I've been fortunate to see the difference I make in my patients' lives. My patient right now is a gentleman who was homeless for years. Even though I have been out

of work injured for a month, I'm the only one he listens to. His nurse and social worker call me sometimes to help them convince him to go to his doctor's appointments because I am the only one he listens to. I always go above and beyond for my patients because they deserve the best.

Right now, there are not enough direct care workers to meet the needs of people who need home care. Direct care workers like myself find it challenging to stay in the field, because of the low wages that are determined by Medicaid payment rates and the lack of job security. Maryland needs to ensure Medicaid programs have enough funding to make direct care jobs good jobs and allow us to stay in this field. If pay was higher, we would be able to not only care for others but ourselves and our own families. The IPAG would give caregivers like myself a voice and ability to be a part of important decision making. We know what our patients need and with us at the table, we could better care for them and make sure we have the support we need. After all, who is going to care for us when we need it?

We understood that CMS in issuing the Ensuring Access to Medicaid mandated the IPAG to have participants from direct care workers, like myself and the actual beneficiaries of HCBS services. We understand that industry also has an interest in raising payment rates in order to address workforce shortage and recent amendments gives them 3 spots. We want to make sure the Maryland Department of Health facilitates a space where input from our community is heard and where we can also discuss issues such as labor standards that make it challenging for us to stay in this field of work. We support the establishment of the IPAG as the first space clearly involving us and allowing our lived experience to impact policy recommendations for improving Medicaid HCBS programs.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB1142 the Interest Parties Advisory Group so home care workers have a voice in the decisions that impact us the most. Thank you.

Submitted via:

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

