

NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

Comments in Support of HB1142/SB920 Public Health– Maryland Interested Parties Advisory Group– Establishment

Health and Government Operations and Senate Finance Committees

March 25, 2025

My name is Yalisa Jabbie, I am a member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and I have been a home care worker for the last 14 years. My passion for care started when my mother became ill. At that time I was too young to take care of her but I saw how my aunt and sister stepped up to give her the care she needed. Watching them give her love and compassion is what sparked my passion for helping others.

I have 5 kids and focused on raising them for a while. But during this time, my dream of working as a caregiver never left me. When my kids got older, I started my career in home care.

I earned certifications in Home Health Aide (HHA), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and as a Med Tech to give me the skills needed to care for those in need. What I love most about my job is the joy it brings when I see my patients happy. Knowing I've made a difference in their lives, whether through companionship or assisting them with daily tasks, like bathing them, feeding them, or reminding them to take medication keeps me motivated.

I always try to go above and beyond for my patients, but the truth is that there are many challenges working in this field. At times, patients can be aggressive, which makes things more difficult.

We also face low wages. I currently make \$17.86 which makes it extremely difficult to make ends meet, especially since I have three children currently in college, working to finance their own education. I also support my family back home in Gambia. But despite these challenges, I always try to do my best. Higher wages would mean so much to me and my family, as it would ease the burden and allow me to help my children and loved ones, something we all hope to do.

If working conditions were better, I believe the quality of care for patients would improve as well. Many people have left home care to look for other better paying opportunities even though they love this job. I myself consider leaving to focus on my own business, but I stay because of my love for caregiving and the bond I share

with my patients. I don't like to even take a day off from work because I know how important my presence is for my current patient. It's a sacrifice, but I make it because I care deeply for her.

We understand CMS requires the IPAG to include direct care workers and HCBS beneficiaries. While the industry advocates for higher payment rates to address workforce shortages, we want to ensure the Maryland Department of Health values our input, particularly on labor issues that impact our work. We support the IPAG as a space where our experiences can influence Medicaid HCBS policies.

For caregivers to have a voice in the workplace would mean so much to me. We deserve to be heard, to have our concerns addressed, and to be treated with the respect we give to others. I look forward to the day when we can celebrate that our work is valued and appreciated. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB1142/SB920 the Interest Parties Advisory Group so home care workers have a voice in the decisions that impact us. Thank you.

Submitted via:

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