



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

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Submitted via:

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

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (“NDWA”) submits this testimony in support of SB920/HB1142 to establish the Maryland **Interested Parties Advisory Group**. SB920/HB1142 outlines the formation of the Interested Parties Advisory Group (IPAG), a new body under the Maryland Department of Health mandated by federal law, that would include representation of direct care workers and consumers. The IPAG will provide critical recommendations to the State to improve provider payment rates for home care services by taking into consideration the wages and working conditions of direct care workers. For too long, poor job quality has hurt recruitment and retention of the direct care workforce and jeopardized access to care within Medicaid’s home and community-based services programs (HCBS). This legislation seeks to ensure that the IPAG is established to include active participation by workers and consumers, so those most impacted by Medicaid rates can influence the rate setting process in order to address the existing workforce shortages and challenges in offering continuous and quality care for Maryland’s aging and disabled populations.

About 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. Founded in 2007, NDWA works to raise wages and strengthen industry standards to ensure that domestic and direct care workers achieve economic security and protection, respect, and dignity in the workplace. NDWA reaches and engages over 400,000 domestic workers on a regular basis through our 68 affiliate organizations in 50 cities and 19 states, our state and local

chapters in the DMV (Washington D.C., Virginia & Maryland), North Carolina, Georgia, New York, San Jose (CA), and Philadelphia (PA) through our digital platforms. 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.

Care work is the foundation upon which strong economies and societies are built. Direct care workers -- the mostly Black and women of color who do the tremendous labor of caring for our aging and disabled loved ones -- are the essential workforce that holds us all together. The work of care workers has historically been devalued by society due to longstanding racism and sexism that contributes to the failure to recognize and value caregiving for its enormous contributions to our society. It is the goal of the National Domestic Workers Alliance to make visible the critical work performed primarily by women of color and raise working standards for this workforce.

The Care Crisis

As the baby-boom population ages and the elderly population grows, the demand for the services of home health aides and personal care aides will continue to increase.¹ Over 127,000 residents of Maryland need help with daily activities such as bathing or dressing.² Fifteen percent of the Maryland population over the age of 65 have reported difficulties with activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing and toileting.³ In Maryland, the number of older adults is predicted to grow by 75 percent in the 30-year period from 2015 to 2045 -- from 837,500 to nearly 1.5 million.⁴ During the same period, the number of adults aged 85 and over will increase by nearly 200 percent.⁴ With only 5 percent expected growth among working-age adults, the ratio of working-age adults to those aged 85 and above in the state will shrink from 32:1 in 2015 to just 12:1 by 2045. With anticipated

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Division of Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). 2018. May 2007 to May 2017 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, available at: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrci.htm>.

² 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

³ PHI, *The Direct Services Workforce In Long-Term Services And Supports in Maryland and The District Of Columbia*, September 21, 2018, available at: <http://phinational.org/resource/the-direct-services-workforce-in-ltss-in-md-and-dc/>

⁴ Id.

separations and growth, research anticipates 37,000 job openings in the state for personal care aides, by 2028.

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. In Maryland, there are approximately 51,200 direct care workers, 86% of the workers are women, and the median annual income for home health and personal care aides is only \$28,124. Not only is the direct care workforce primarily women, 73% of all direct care workers are Black and 84 % are women of color.⁵

SB920/HB1142 seeks to ensure representation of direct care workers in an institution that can help influence Medicaid payment rates to raise wages for direct care workers, ensure this is career with a living wage that can both retain workers in the field and make the work more attractive to jobseekers to fill the growing need for these jobs.

The Interested Parties Advisory Group (IPAG)

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. In 2024, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published a federal rule, entitled Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services The rule recognized the inextricable link between access to continuous and quality care, and the wages and working conditions of the direct care workforce. It called for the establishment of an Interested Parties Advisory Group in each State that would advise on Medicaid payments to ensure rates are set high enough to pay home care workers adequate wages and stabilize the workforce. It permits representation of direct care workers and workers' rights organizations to be a part of this official body established by the state.

SB920 provides a framework and mandate to the Maryland Department of Health to establish a robust Interested Parties Advisory Group that allows for meaningful participation of the direct care workforce, helps ensure that Maryland takes action to set Medicaid rates high enough for sufficient wages, analyzes other issues facing

⁵ PHI, *Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Facts 2024*, available at: <https://www.phinational.org/resource/direct-care-workers-in-the-united-states-key-facts-2024>

the workforce, and gives workers a voice to provide strong recommendations to policymakers on how the state can raise rates in order to improve working standards. The bill lays out a balanced composition of members on the IPAG to ensure that the voices of direct care workers are adequately represented along with the voices of other relevant stakeholders.

While federal law did not mandate inclusion of provider-agencies or their representatives as part of the IPAG, the amended bill now holds 3 seats for employer representatives. We support the passage of this bill, but also recognize that in its current iteration the Maryland Department of Health will have to make a concerted effort to ensure the voices of direct care workers are not diluted or undermined by industry interests. For instance, the IPAG should be a space where direct care workers can raise recommendations such as conditioning increases in payment rates on improved labor standards necessary to effectively address the direct care workforce shortage .

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. The IPAG will develop recommendations that enable policymakers to make sound decisions to stabilize the workforce in order to ensure both access and better quality of care. As our population ages and the demand for home and community-based services sharply rises, without policy interventions that take into consideration those directly impacted, Marylanders will be left to fend for themselves and their loved ones.

For these reasons, the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) fully supports SB920 the Interested Parties Advisory Group Act of 2025.

Sincerely,

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

Reena Arora, Esq.

Direct of Care Policy
National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)
reena@domesticworkers.org