



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

Health and Government Operations

March 25, 2025

My name is Melissa Carter and I am a member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. I've been a direct care worker since 2001, so about 24 years now. What drives me in this field is a deep love for seniors and a desire to make a real difference in their lives. Caring for them, seeing them thrive, and helping them live longer lives is what I'm passionate about. I've seen my patients thrive when they are able to age at home and I've seen them have a stronger desire to live longer than they would if they were in a facility.

I've worked across various care systems, and I've seen the difference that proper care can make. I saw the importance and grew my passion for home care with my aunts. They were twins and both of them suffered from Alzheimer's disease. One of them received home care and the other one was in a nursing home. The aunt who received home care lived longer than my other aunt and I truly believe it's because of the different types of care they received.

I had a patient who suffered from bipolar disorder and manic depression. She didn't want to bathe or take care of herself when I first met her, and she struggled to find motivation. I took care of her and helped her regain some confidence and independence. She eventually started eating better, exercising, and even quit smoking. Seeing her transform was so rewarding.

This work is rewarding but tiresome, and the pay is not enough, especially with Medicaid funded agencies. Everyone deserves quality care, regardless of their financial situation. If we get sick, we either stay home to protect our patients or go into work and risk getting our patients sick. I don't ever want to put my patient at risk, but calling off means losing our pay which is tough. This job requires a heart for the work, and sometimes, we end up doing more than what's required. What we really need is respect and appreciation for what we do.

Higher wages would make a huge difference for me and my family. It would allow us to have more stability, without needing multiple jobs or side hustles. It would mean I could focus more on my family and my own life, maybe even buy a home instead of

renting my apartment. But more importantly, better wages would lead to better care for patients. If home care workers are happy and feel valued, that energy will be reflected in the care we provide. Patients would be happier and live longer if we felt supported and valued. Providers cannot pay higher wages unless Medicaid payment rates are increased.

Fair pay for the work is the first step to being recognized for the essential work we do. Taking care of your loved ones, bathing them, feeding them, helping them go to the bathroom so that families can have the peace of mind to go on about their days. Our role is vital, and without home care workers our society would be broken.

We understand that CMS's Ensuring Access to Medicaid rule mandates the IPAG to include direct care workers, like myself, and beneficiaries of HCBS services. While the industry seeks to address workforce shortages by raising payment rates, we also want to ensure the Maryland Department of Health creates space for worker input as we, along with our patients, are the most impacted. We support the IPAG's establishment as the first platform where our lived experiences can directly influence Medicaid HCBS policy recommendations.

But the reality is that many home care workers are leaving the field because the pay just isn't enough, especially in this economy. For things to change, we need a voice and representation to bring the changes we deserve. 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 and Medicaid rates that impact us. Thank you.

Submitted via:

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