Testimony on HB1350
Funding for Wage Increases for Medical Provider Workers
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To Chair Mcintosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Christina Farabee. I'm a Rehabilitation Technician at a hospital in Baltimore, and a member of 1199SEIU. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the country, with over 10,000 members in Maryland and DC alone. As a healthcare worker and a union member, I support HB1350 and urge the committee to vote favorably on this bill.

There is a massive short-staffing crisis across the healthcare industry. This has been a problem for years and was made even more severe by COVID19 as we have seen more health care workers quit their jobs or pass away than ever. Low wages are one of the most cited reasons that healthcare workers are quitting – this bill can help reduce short staffing by raising wages.

On day one of the pandemic, I was redeployed since my department had to downsize because of short staffing. For me, it was a sink-or-swim situation, which is incredibly stressful. I was no longer working in the environment where I used to be every day so there was a learning curve on top of working short staffed. I love my patients, and I want to care for them, but it is impossible to give proper care when we don't have enough staff. Every day I see my patients and put a smile on my face – if only my patients knew the pain my smile is hiding.

Even though my shift is only eight hours, I feel like I'm actually working 16 hours because I am doing the work of two Rehabilitation Technicians all by myself, and I don't receive additional pay for my additional work. Often, I'm forced to work overtime so my patients can be cared for, even when it's a different specialty than I usually work in. I'm overwhelmed and stretched so thin to the point where I've found myself asking "Do I even have anything left to give my patients" and "How much more can I give if my body is saying 'we're done'!"?

Short staffing negatively impacts me in my work life and takes away from my personal life too. I can't even get approved to take a mental health day off work because patient care is in such high demand. This problem is making me and my coworkers burn out. When I get off work, I have no energy left to care for myself. All I can do after work is try to unwind, sleep, then go back to work. There is no time or energy left for me to focus on starting my own small business, which is a passion of mine.

The short staffing crisis in Long-Term Care is making the short staffing crisis in hospitals worse. I can't tell you how many times I have sent a patient home from the hospital, only to have them return in the next day or two because their Long-Term Care facility does not have the capacity to care for the patient. Even though HB1350 wouldn't raise my wages as a hospital worker, I support it because I stand in solidarity with my union comrades who work in Long-Term Care and raising their wages will reduce the burden of patient overflow to hospitals.

Healthcare workers like myself are in crisis, and we NEED YOUR HELP. **Take care of us like we take care of our patients!** The pay we receive does not reflect the work we do. Increasing wages will reduce the number of healthcare workers walking off the job. Please vote yes on this legislation to raise wages for Long-Term Care workers. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Christina Farabee
Member, 1199SEIU UHW E.

PS: I urge you to also pass legislation in the future that will raise wages and provide hazard pay for hospital workers like me. Our wages must reflect the dignity and respect we deserve.