



Official Testimony

HB 636

Maryland Health Care Commission – Assisted Living Programs – Study

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Governance Operations Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation and represent thousands of healthcare workers in long-term care facilities, including Assisted Living Facilities, in Maryland. Our union supports HB 636 and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

Maryland's healthcare industry is amid a staffing crisis that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the workers who provide care in congregate care settings such as Assisted Living Facilities are no exception.

According to Office of Healthcare Quality, as of December 1, 2021, there were almost 1,700 licensed Assisted Living Facilities operating throughout Maryland. Nearly 500 of these participate in our Medicaid waiver program. Over 1,000 of these facilities have 9 beds or fewer.

Unlike Skilled Nursing Facilities which operate under a host of federal regulations that can be enforced by our Maryland Office of Healthcare Quality, Assisted Living Facilities do not. We believe the State must step in to ensure that they are operating safely on behalf of the families who depend on them

The Office of Healthcare Quality is charged with Nursing Home inspections and responding to complaints. It is critical for decision makers to understand quality and staffing trends in this industry, to properly dedicate the resources necessary to ensure that these facilities are safe.

We believe it is now the time for the State to recognize the importance of this congregate care setting to our state's healthcare system. Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care Model recognizes the importance of what happens to patients after they are discharged from hospitals. For our Total Cost of Care Model to be a success, we must have Long-Term Care settings operating under the highest standards of quality. We believe this bill would provide a powerful tool for decision makers.

We, therefore, urge this Committee to give HB 636 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones

Political Director

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