



Support HB544: Reporting for Residential Service Agencies (RSAs)

February 15, 2022: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

The IMAGE Center of Maryland is a Center for Independent Living serving people with disabilities throughout Central Maryland. Our services include assistance with benefits to work counseling, housing, assistive technologies, independent living, and others.

We see daily the problems created through the current system where employees are paid minimum wages, but wrongly classified as contractors, expected to also pay their own withholdings. Of course, it's illegal. When you are told when and where to work, you're an employee for most purposes. The problem is that these employees are essentially told, "take it or leave it." Mostly, needing to feed their families, they take it. The result is very high turnover, poor service quality and people with disabilities literally left, isolated in their homes and unable to leave, because their worker simply couldn't take it anymore.

Even though these home care services are funded by Medicaid and paid by the state, the state has blinders on when it comes to how these workers are treated. We cannot solve a problem when the Maryland Department of Health refuses to ask for the most basic information – workers' wage rates and classification as employee or independent contractor. HB544 will empower policymakers to help solve the home care workforce crisis by giving them this basic information. It's not too much to ask businesses receiving state money to tell the state how they're treating these workers, especially when the workers are so critically important to the independence of people with disabilities and older adults.

HB544 is a much-needed step in moving Maryland toward providing a workforce that can help people receive care in their own homes with dignity rather than expensive nursing facilities.

The IMAGE Center of Maryland strongly urges a favorable report on HB544.

Sincerely,

Mike Bullis
Executive Director