

SHANEKA HENSON
Legislative District 30A
Anne Arundel County

Ways and Means Committee

Joint Committee on
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 154
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3045 · 301-858-3045
800-492-7122 Ext. 3045
Shaneka.Henson@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 3, 2023

Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Vice Chair Bonnie Cullison
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 725. The purpose of this legislation is to sustainably address the long-term care staffing crisis in Maryland through the funding of wages and benefits of direct and indirect care workers.

Direct care pay has historically remained low due to multiple factors, including under-investment in long-term care services and intersecting legacies of sexism, racism, and xenophobia that undervalue caregiving work and those who provide it. The 2021 average annual wage for nursing assistants in Maryland was just \$34,000. Among certified nursing assistants, over 90% are women and over half are people of color. Additionally, 1 in 5 certified nursing assistants are on public assistance and 31% lack affordable housing which has disincentivized new caregivers from entering the field.

Staffing shortages are expected to grow as workers find better pay in other industries. The staffing crisis in nursing homes is not new. In 2018, two years before the COVID-19 pandemic, PHI projected the need for a 40% increase in direct care staff to address the needs of Maryland's aging population. The American Health Care Association which represents nursing homes across the country released survey results that revealed stark numbers: 98% are experiencing difficulty hiring new staff and 76% of facilities said their current financial situation and lack of funding is an obstacle in being able to offer competitive wages to hire new staff.

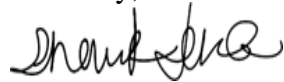
New research from LeadingAge @UMass Boston shows that raising the pay of direct care workers by just 15% would yield an impressive return on investment, including concrete benefits for a variety of stakeholders. Workers would be able to support themselves better financially,

long-term service providers would see fewer staffing shortages, reduced turnover, and higher productivity, and care recipients will have consistent and reliable care.

Simply put, I am sponsoring this bill because I believe everyone deserves the opportunity to live well. These critical caregivers should not have to struggle to care for their own families on unlivable wages – investing in quality care means investing in our care workforce.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge a favorable report on HB725.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shaneka Henson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Delegate Shaneka Henson