
BILL NO: Senate Bill 604
TITLE: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and Personal Care
Aides - Reimbursement and Wages
COMMITTEE: Finance (Budget & Taxation)
HEARING DATE: March 7, 2023
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 604 seeks to increase funding for certain Medicaid-funded home care programs while also ensuring that home care workers get a fairer share of that money – improving job quality, recruitment, and retention. As our nation faces an on-going crisis of care, derived from the pandemic, staffing shortages, and an increasingly aging population, anything we can do to address these issues will benefit Maryland families.

SB 604 will increase the hourly rate that Medicaid-funded home care programs receive, but only so long as the employer creates a certain minimum wage for workers. This is significant as Maryland ranks 49th out of 50 states in the difference between home care workers' actual wages and what is needed to attract and retain enough workers while paying workers enough to live, according to June 2022 study by the Economic Policy Institute and New America. This is a particularly acute burden for women, and women of color in particular, who represent a disproportionate percentage of personal care aides.

SB 604 seeks to address the shortage of personal care aides and the abysmal wages those employees currently earn, which in turn will support Maryland families and enable continued economic security for women in Maryland. As such, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 604.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.