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Budget and Taxation Committee  
Education, Business and  
Administration Subcommittee

Pensions Subcommittee  
Chair, Rules Committee

*Joint Committees*

Audit and Evaluation Committee

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and  
State Personnel Oversight

Joint Committee on Pensions

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson

SB0604: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides –  
Reimbursement and Wages

Good afternoon, Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Finance Committee. I am here to present SB0604 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides – Reimbursement and Wages.

This legislation is pivotal in providing fair working conditions for personal care workers across the state, issuing a just rate to each of the workers within the medical agencies. The personal care field is a rigorous environment, where many of these workers are put under strict work conditions while also caring for the population that is disabled or in critical need. The personal care workers are burdened with no tax break relief and are making just above minimum wage. These conditions are not sustainable for the workstyle that caregivers embark upon such as bathing and toileting, which is a very intimate action for the worker and the client. This makes worker turnover not only an inconvenience, but also a traumatizing occurrence to the client because of the potential of this intimate relationship being severed. Caregivers are provided with little assistance and tend to use personal funds for gas and essential needs such as food. In Maryland ninety percent of home care workers are women. Their average pay in Maryland is only \$14 an hour, making them underpaid and exhausted, which results in workers leaving for higher pay, and could risk the quality of care provided to this vulnerable population. We need to take care of these workers, because if we do not, we would be neglecting those caregivers and these at risk communities across the great State of Maryland.

The purpose of this legislation is to increase the Medicaid reimbursement rates for home care from \$23 an hour to \$25; requiring provider agencies to pay the greater of \$16 per hour or 64% of the hourly reimbursement rate to personal care aides. This bill does not apply to programs under the Developmental Disabilities Administration, and it does not apply to the private sector. It only applies to Medicaid home care provided under the Department of Health's Office of Long-Term Services and Supports. SB604 makes sure workers get a fair share of those public dollars from Medicaid. This bill ensures that our caregivers are being adequately protected while reimbursing them for their efforts, increasing the hourly wage earned from \$14 to \$16.

Workers would now have increases in wage in accordance with the Medicaid reimbursement rate increases which ultimately can increase the overall lifestyle for each of these caregivers.

Thus, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB0604.