



Senate Finance Committee
Senate Bill 604 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program –
Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides – Reimbursement and Wages
March 7, 2023
SUPPORT

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for Senate Bill 604 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides – Reimbursement and Wages.

As social workers, we are in favor of this bill because it increases wages for personal care workers who provide vital services to vulnerable older adults and persons with disabilities, through the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) programs. This bill also increases the reimbursement to Residential Services Agencies (RSAs) and holds them accountable for paying their employees at the required rates.

Currently, the median wage for home care workers in Maryland is only \$14.08, and even less for those funded by Medicaid programs. Because the pay is low and the work is demanding, there is a serious shortage of personal care aides in Maryland; this shortage leads to delays and gaps in care for older Marylanders and those with disabilities on Medicaid HCBS programs. As our state’s personal care workforce shrinks, the need continues to grow as Maryland’s population ages. According to the Administration for Community Living, 22 percent of Maryland’s population will be 60 or older by the year 2030, an increase of 26 percent from 2012.

This bill increases the Medicaid reimbursement rate to \$25 an hour, and mandates that, by July 1, 2024, personal care aides in Medicaid HCBS must be paid at least \$16 per hour. In subsequent years, the bill requires that personal care workers receive at least 64% of the payments that the agencies receive. This payment scheme benefits the RSAs and the workers. The bill also requires the RSAs to submit documentation of their compliance with the wage standards to the Department of Health. The state will take enforcement action against provider agencies that fail to submit the cost reports or fail to pay personal care aides at the required rates. These provisions will likely ensure that the law is enacted consistently.

Senate Bill 604 will help hard-working personal care employees and their families, increase the supply of workers, and enhance care for older Marylanders and Marylanders with disabilities in Medicaid HCBS programs.

We ask that you give a favorable report on Senate Bill 604.

Respectfully,

Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW
Executive Director, NASW-MD