



**Testimony on HB075
Funding for Wage Increases for Medical Provider Workers
Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee:

My name is Rhonda White, and I am Certified Medicine Aid in a long-term care facility in Maryland. I'm a member of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, the largest healthcare workers union in the nation. We represent over 10,000 workers in Maryland/DC. Our union urges a favorable report for HB075 Funding for Health Care Workers.

As healthcare workers, we made sacrifices on the frontlines of the COVID19 Pandemic to care for your loved ones. Some of us survived, others lost their lives or were forced to leave the healthcare industry. For those of us still working, we are dealing with a short staffing crisis. This was a problem before the pandemic but is even worse now. In my facility we have one GNA to 20 patients. We always provide high quality healthcare, but we can't be everywhere at once. Management paying us low wages keeps our facilities short staffed because they are failing to recruit and retain workers. That means patient care suffers and workers are burning out.

We need a wage increase because the cost of living is going up faster than our paychecks. We shouldn't have to choose between paying rent or gas or food. Healthcare workers like me work hard and save lives. We deserve to earn a living wage.

The Maryland Medicaid Wage Passthrough Act works to increase Medicaid Reimbursement Rates and ensure a fair portion of that increase goes directly towards worker wages and benefits. Investing in the care workforce in Maryland's nursing homes is a good public health policy and is a matter of racial equity. The direct care workforce in our nursing homes is overwhelmingly made up of Black women¹. We are not only failing to attract new workers to these jobs, but we are also trapping those who are currently in this workforce in poverty.

Because care can't wait, I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB075.

Sincerely,

Rhonda White

¹PHI, The Direct Services Workforce in Long-Term Services and Supports in Maryland and the District of Columbia, 2018, available at <http://phinational.org/resource/the-direct-services-workforce-in-ltss-in-md-and-dc>