



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

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

My name is Reeba McKenny, and I am a Geriatric Nursing Assistant 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.

I work in Long Term Care because I love that I get to help people. Some of my residents have family members who can't visit them, so I became like my patient's family. It brings me so much joy to be able to put a smile on their face, even when it's from something simple like ironing their shirt or helping them eat some cereal.

The only downside of working in Long Term Care is our wages are far too low. It's hard to survive on low wages. With the high cost of living, I am having trouble providing food for my family. I have to gamble every month about how late I can pay a bill just so that I can keep food on the table. I can't always afford my medications and that negatively impacts my health. I want to be able to afford a good quality of life for my family. My son is 16 years old, and prom is coming up. He is so excited to go to prom, but I can't afford everything he will need for that, so I am considering taking on another job to provide for him. While this would help ease the cost-of-living burden a *little* bit, it would mean that I would be spending even less time with my family especially my grandchildren. I will be 43 years old this year and I am worried about how I will be able to retire with dignity because I am never able to save any money for myself after doing my best to provide for my family.

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.

In Unity,

Reeba McKenny, GNA