



## Testimony: HB 490

### Residential Service Agencies – Employee Registry

#### Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and members of Health, Government, & Operations Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. We are proud members of the Caring Across Maryland coalition supporting HB 490 Homecare Worker Registry with sponsor amendments and we urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

**Building a strong care infrastructure starts with addressing the care gap.** According to the Department of Aging, Maryland’s population of those aged 65 and older is estimated to increase by 40%. The projected need for home care workers is expected to increase by 33% with 74,000 openings by 2030<sup>1</sup>.

**SB 230** establishes a registry of all homecare workers employed by residential service agencies in the state. A homecare registry is a vital state oversight tool to know whether our home care workforce meets varying patient needs. It can help to strengthen the homecare work force by understanding training needs and retention trends in the state and most importantly, improve the care patients receive in their homes.

We are favorable to this bill with the following sponsor **amendments**:

- The registry must be available to the public.
- Ensure that this bill does not exclude workers hired by residential service agencies that are independent contractors.
- Ensure that this bill applies to residential services agencies that provide personal care services not only home health care.
- Lastly, erase language about employees who are survivors of domestic violence, rape, or sexual assault since regulations includes protections for workers who do not want to provide their names.

**Caregiving is personal work and a gender and racial equity issue.** Home care or personal care aides provide essential support for individuals with long term conditions or disabilities in people’s homes providing assistance with personal care such as bathing, dressing, mobility, toilet care, and eating. Personal Care Aides also help patients with housekeeping, transportation, and social or employment activities outside the home. Both workers and the individuals requiring services are disproportionately people of color. The care force is disproportionately women; disproportionately Black, Hispanic, and Asian American/Pacific Islander women; and in many cases immigrant women<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>“PHI's Workforce Data Center.” *PHI*, 24 Jan. 2023, <https://www.phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/#var=Employment+Projections&states=24>.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.howardcountymd.gov/aging-independence/resource/home-care-registry>

<sup>3</sup>MA: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/home-care-worker-registry> <sup>3</sup>CA:

<https://www.cclid.dss.ca.gov/hcsregistry/About.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> “Charactering MA Workers in Select COVID-19 Essential Services”. January 2021.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/characterizing-ma-workers-in-select-covid-19-essential-services-healthcare-workers/download>

**A workforce registry specifically for home care aides providing personal care has multiple functionalities.** Tracks training needs and workforce development areas of growth. More than half of home care agencies lack defined career paths or educational resources to support the advancement of their staff which is key for worker recruitment and retention<sup>1</sup>.

**Workforce registries are vital state oversight tool.** In Maryland, Howard County has created a home care registry which includes training and certification information so that patients are able to find a worker that best meets their needs in the county<sup>2</sup>. Maryland collects name, address, title, training and certification information on all other licensed healthcare occupations through licensing boards. This information has been important to understand workforce challenges, retention trends, and training/education needs.

**States such as Massachusetts and California have already implemented a home care worker registry** which has allowed the state to adequately address the growing need for home care services with a well-supported homecare workforce<sup>3</sup>. In 2021, Massachusetts created a report to address workplaces that are vulnerable to COVID-19 exposure and transmission. They found that a greater percentage of workers in healthcare support occupations reported one or more underlying medical conditions that may increase the risk for severe COVID-19 complications when compared to all other workers in non-healthcare occupations and compared to health diagnosis and treating practitioners (26.3% vs. 19.3% and 18.0%). Findings like this is key to supporting home care workers who are essential healthcare support workers<sup>4</sup>.

During the ongoing pandemic, these states successfully disseminated important information regarding pandemic relief and benefits for essential healthcare workers including home care workers. However, in Maryland, too many home care workers were left behind during the pandemic, unaware of childcare benefits for essential healthcare workers and other COVID-19 related guidance.

The lack of a robust care infrastructure in the state leaves consumers struggling to find workers and maintain work relationships with them. Establishing a home care registry is the first step to adequately addressing Maryland's growing need for homecare workers and to bolster our home care workforce. For those reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on HB 490.

In unity,

Ricarra Jones

Political Director

[Ricarra.jones@1199.org](mailto:Ricarra.jones@1199.org)

<sup>1</sup>"PHI's Workforce Data Center." *PHI*, 24 Jan. 2023, <https://www.phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/#var=Employment+Projections&states=24>.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.howardcountymd.gov/aging-independence/resource/home-care-registry>

<sup>3</sup>MA: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/home-care-worker-registry> <sup>3</sup>CA:

<https://www.cclld.dss.ca.gov/hcsregistry/About.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> "Charactering MA Workers in Select COVID-19 Essential Services". January 2021.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/characterizing-ma-workers-in-select-covid-19-essential-services-healthcare-workers/download>