



## Testimony in Support of HB 725

### **Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Community First Choice Program - Reimbursement of Service Providers**

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

My name is Nicole Henry 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 HB 725.

I am a single mom of a 9-year-old and a 16-year-old. I have to work overtime and night shifts in order pay my bills which is essentially rent, car insurance, and utilities. I also have lupus which means I take an injection once a week that my insurance from work used to pay for but it doesn't so that medication is now \$500 a month. When I work overtime, my 16-year-old takes care of my younger one which means she's missing out on activities that other high school students are participating in. This past year, I worked Thanksgiving and Christmas and I could barely afford to get my kids gifts they wanted. We are working every day caring for other peoples' mothers, fathers, grandparents. I am spending more time with my residents than I do with my own kids. I don't understand why we must deal with low pay that makes it so that we can't even survive!

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. Due to low wages, the long-term care industry experiences high turnover and a staffing crisis. One of my co-workers quit nursing to start her own business making cakes and dinners. She makes more money doing that than when she was a GNA. The staffing crisis impacts patients and workers like me. I care for my residents like they are my own family. I can't do that when I am one of two GNAs taking care of 60 residents on a night shift. This bill is a systemic solution to the dangerous staffing crisis that impacts our nursing homes.

The pandemic highlighted the brokenness of our long-term care system. The need for long term care services will only rise in the state, and this legislation ensures we are adequately supporting care workers so we can take care of our families and your loved ones.

Because care can't wait, I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 725.

Sincerely,

Nicole Henry, [nnikoli0608@gmail.com](mailto:nnikoli0608@gmail.com)