

Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters  
**HB 725: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and  
Community First Choice Program - Reimbursement of Service Providers**  
Position: Favorable

Chair Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison,

My name is Eric Colchamiro, and I am Director of Government Affairs for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to be before you here today on House Bill 725, which—as drafted—increases from 4% to 10% the percentage reimbursement rate increase that is required to be included in the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2024 for providers of certain health care services under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, the Maryland Children's Health Program, and the Community First Choice Program; requires that 90% of the funding increase be used to fund wage increases for certain workers; and requires that nursing homes annually submit a cost report to the Maryland Department of Health

The bill under consideration today is a rate increase. It is a rate increase for our skilled nursing providers, who care for our loved ones. It is a rate increase for an industry that has received well over \$100 million in state and federal funds. And it is a rate increase for a skilled nursing facility which is increasingly owned by for-profit providers, including real estate investment trusts.

As Governor Moore has said, we must not consider policy to be an either/or choice. We can help industry and help the workforce.

And this workforce that cares for our seniors with Alzheimer's, including when they begin to lose the ability to speak. This is the workforce who has not been talked about enough, during the pandemic, when we discuss health care heroes. We need to value them; not just by acknowledging the workforce shortage, or talking about staffing costs, but by realizing that we do right by them—and our loved ones they care for—by paying them a meaningful wage.