



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 328**

Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

By Stephanie Klapper, Deputy Director, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

January 24, 2024

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support Senate Bill 328 which would call for an 8% increase in Medicaid provider reimbursements to skilled nursing facilities starting in 2026 while mandating that 75% of that increase be allocated towards direct patient care staffing. Special thank you to Vice-Chair Rosapepe for sponsoring this critical legislation. I am testifying on behalf of Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, and our mission is quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders.

Under your leadership over 400,000 Marylanders have enrolled in health coverage since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, cutting the uninsured rate in Maryland in half to 6% of all Marylanders. As more Marylanders receive access to affordable health coverage, it is critical to ensure that the care they access is high quality. Roughly 50% of nursing homes have annual direct care worker turnover rates between 40% to 60%, meaning that half of nursing homes must replace half their staff each year.<sup>1</sup> Doing more to ensure that direct care workers receive living wages would relieve staffing shortages and reduce turnover rates, contributing to improved quality of care for some of our most vulnerable residents.

Thanks to your leadership, Maryland has one of the top five health care systems in the entire nation, and SB 328 will help us continue to lead. We urge a favorable report for SB 328.

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<sup>1</sup> National Consumer Voice, 2022. "High Staff Turnover: A Job Quality Crisis in Nursing Homes." [Source](#).