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Bill: SB 371 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides - Reimbursement and Wage Reports (Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024)

Committee: Senate Finance

Position: Favorable

Date: February 6, 2024

On behalf of the more than 110,000 Marylanders living with Alzheimer's and the nearly 250,000 caregivers, the Alzheimer's Association supports *SB 371 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides - Reimbursement and Wage Reports (Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024)* and urges a favorable report.

SB 371 will require provider agencies to submit certain reports to the Maryland Department of Labor regarding wage rates for personal care aides. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will compare the reimbursement rates for certain home- and community-based services (HCBS) provided under Maryland Medicaid with actual costs associated with providing these services. Based on this review, MDH will develop a plan to close any gaps in reimbursement rates, including considering wages. Findings and recommendations will be updated every two years.

According to a study published in July 2023, Maryland has the highest estimated prevalence in the nation for Alzheimer's dementia in people aged 65 and older (12.9%).¹ Additionally, among U.S. jurisdictions², both Baltimore City and Prince George's County fall in the top 5 jurisdictions with the highest estimated prevalence rates, 16.6% and 16.1% respectively.³

As the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease increases, so does the demand for additional workforce involved in caring for those living with the disease. Personal care aides are an essential part of our care ecosystem. However, availability of these aides is expected to decline if no action is taken to address recruitment and retention. This bill works to address this issue by providing regular data that would inform policy decisions to ensure there are sufficient workers to care for people living with dementia and other vulnerable adults.

The Alzheimer's Association is committed to strengthening the dementia care workforce and urges a favorable report on SB 371. Please contact Megan Peters, Director of Government Affairs at mrpeters@alz.org with any questions.

¹ Dhana K, Beck T, Desai P, Wilson RS, Evans DA, Rajan KB. Prevalence of Alzheimer's disease dementia in the 50 US states and 3142 counties: A population estimate using the 2020 bridged-race postcensal from the National Center for Health Statistics. *Alzheimer's Dement.* 2023; 19: 4388–4395. <https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.13081>

² Jurisdictions are defined as a population of 10,000 or more individuals aged 65 and older.

³ Ibid.