

**Testimony Before the Senate Finance Committee
February 6, 2024**

**Senate Bill 371 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and
Personal Care Aides - Reimbursement and Wage Reports**

Support

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for Senate Bill 371 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies and Personal Care Aides - Reimbursement and Wages.

As social workers, we are in favor of this bill because it calls for the state to study the wages of personal care aides employed by Maryland Medicaid provider agencies. The bill requires provider agencies to submit a report on the wages that home care workers earn to the Maryland Department of Labor. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will analyze those rates in comparison to the funding that the provider agencies received from the state. Finally, MDH will determine the amount of any wage adjustment required to bring wages of personal care aides to at least 150% of the state minimum wage.

These steps are important because the median wage for home care workers in Maryland is currently \$15 per hour. Because the pay is low and the work is demanding, there is a serious shortage of personal care aides in Maryland; this shortage leads to delays and gaps in care for older Marylanders and those with disabilities in Medicaid community-based programs. As our state's personal care workforce shrinks, the need continues to grow as Maryland's population ages. According to the Administration for Community Living, 22 percent of Maryland's population will be sixty or older by the year 2030, an increase of 26 percent from 2012.

We hope that the wage analysis required by SB 371 will lead to an increase in wages for the hard-working Marylanders who provide vital personal care services to some of our most vulnerable citizens. We believe SB 371 is the first step to requiring more fair wages to support personal care employees and their families, increase the supply of workers, and enhance care for older Marylanders and Marylanders with disabilities in Maryland Medicaid programs.

We ask that you give a favorable report on SB 371.

Respectfully,

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director, NASW-MD