



Testimony in support of HB 39

Homecare Workers Rights Act of 2024

To Chair Peña-Melnyk and members of the House, Government, & Operations Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. 1199 SEIU is a proud partner of the Caring Across Maryland coalition which consists of direct care workers, patients, loved ones, and advocates who are committed to improving the long-term care infrastructure in Maryland through bolstering job quality for care workers, protecting quality of care, and increasing access to affordable long-term care.

In order to protect our most vulnerable direct care workers, HB 39 ensures that the Department of Health only reimburses residential service agencies that are classifying their workers as employees. 1199 SEIU represents workers within long-term care facilities. Many of our members interact with home care aides who help some residents in the facilities. Home care workers are an important part of the patient care team. Given the high demand of home care workers, addressing deeply entrenched retention issues is imperative. Worker misclassification strips workers from the full entitlement of just compensation and benefits. Patient quality of care is negatively impacted by high turnover when home care workers are misclassified.

The widespread misclassification of these workers hurts everyone. It hurts workers by worsening job quality, cutting them out of the social safety net (making it harder for them to get benefits like workers' compensation when they're injured) and imposing on them a higher "self-employment" tax burden when they should be getting a tax refund. It hurts consumers by shrinking the size of the workforce they depend on for their independence and increasing worker turnover, which –given the intimate nature of the work – can be traumatizing. It hurts law-abiding RSAs that face unfair competition from RSAs that save money by shirking their obligations as workers' employers. It hurts the State of Maryland by depriving the unemployment insurance trust fund (among other things) of critical revenue that Maryland and its workers depend on.

1199 SEIU believes that care work is essential work. Our public dollars should be going to law-abiding home care agencies not those who undercut essential staff. For those reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on HB 489.

In unity,

Ricarra Jones

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