

DAWN D. GILE
Legislative District 33
Anne Arundel County

Finance Committee

Chair

Anne Arundel County
Senate Delegation



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3568 • 301-858-3568
800-492-7122 Ext. 3568
Dawn.Gile@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB0920 - Public Health - Maryland Interested Parties Advisory Group - Establishment

Madame Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and fellow members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SB920 is about making sure that policymakers hear the voices and experiences of those most affected by Maryland's Medicaid-funded home care policies.

Background

All of us know someone who has depended on home care at one time or another so that they can remain in their home and not go into a nursing facility. The need for such home care services is rising as Marylanders live longer. And as the need for more home care increases, so does the need for more workers to provide that home care.¹

Unfortunately, there are not nearly enough workers to meet the needs of Maryland's older adults and people with disabilities. Maryland ranks 49th out of 50 states – *the second worst* – in the difference between home care workers' actual wages and a living wage, according to a recent [study](#) by the Economic Policy Institute and New America.²

Most home care in our state is funded by Medicaid. Because of that, Medicaid policies – including reimbursement rates – determine whether home care jobs are good enough to attract and retain the home care workforce that Marylanders depend on.

Recognizing that connection, the Biden Administration's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized a rule called "Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services." The rule ensures that states administer their Medicaid home care programs effectively – including by establishing an "interested parties advisory group," or IPAG. The interested parties advisory groups are comprised of people affected by Medicaid-funded home care that gathers and advises the state on Medicaid home care policies, including reimbursement rates, with the goal of ensuring that all eligible Marylanders have access to the care they need and deserve.

¹ PHI, *The Direct Services Workforce in Long-Term Services and Supports in Maryland and the District of Columbia*, 2018, available at <http://phinational.org/resource/the-direct-services-workforce-in-ltss-in-md-and-dc/>.

² Economic Policy Institute and New America, *All States must set higher wage benchmarks for home health care workers*, June 2022, available at <https://www.epi.org/publication/state-home-health-care-wages/>.

Solution

SB0920 implements the requirements of the federal rule, builds on it, and implements it ahead of schedule. It ensures that policymakers hear the voices of those who actually do the home care work that so many Marylanders depend on *and* of those who depend on their care.

We have been working closely with the Maryland Department of Health on ironing out the details of the bill, and I am confident that we will have amendment language that reflects agreement on the precise language soon.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0920.