



Building a Just Society

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SB920: Public Health - Maryland Interested Parties Advisory Group – Establishment

Senate Finance Committee, March 4, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project works to expand and enforce the right of low-wage workers to receive an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. **The PJC supports SB920, which would address the leading cause of our direct care worker staffing crisis.**

Direct care workers support older Marylanders and Marylanders with disabilities with daily tasks, such as eating, walking, and hygiene. These workers are crucial to keeping Marylanders in their own homes and in the community, yet many of these workers are not adequately compensated for their vital work.

Direct care workers who provide Medicaid-funded services typically earn only \$14,600 on the Eastern Shore and \$28,000 in the capital region.¹ Wages for this work lag \$2.28 behind wages for occupations with similar or lower entry-level requirements.² It is no surprise that a recent report found that “[i]nadequate compensation is the single biggest factor driving the workforce crisis.”³

SB920's Interested Parties Advisory Group (IPAG) would ensure that our Medicaid payment rates are sufficient to attract and retain workers. SB920 designs Maryland's IPAG to comply with and build upon federal regulations that require the creation of an advisory group. Under SB920, this robust IPAG would secure meaningful participation from affected workers, generating incisive and impactful recommendations on how to rectify Maryland's staffing crisis.

For these reasons, the PJC **SUPPORTS SB920** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report. Should you have any questions, please call Sam Williamson at 410-625-9409 ext. 234.

¹ Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis, *Final Report 2022/2023* (Dec. 31, 2023), p. 14, [https://health.maryland.gov/docs/SB%20440%20Ch.%20708%20\(2022\)%20%E2%80%93%202023%20Final%20Report%20%E2%80%93%20Commission%20to%20Study%20the%20Heal.pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/docs/SB%20440%20Ch.%20708%20(2022)%20%E2%80%93%202023%20Final%20Report%20%E2%80%93%20Commission%20to%20Study%20the%20Heal.pdf).

² PHI, *Direct Care Workforce State Index: Maryland*, <https://www.phinational.org/state/maryland/>.

³ Meg LaPorte & David Rodwin, Maryland Regional Direct Services Collaborative, *Long-Term Services and Supports in Baltimore* (March 2023), p.3, <https://files.constantcontact.com/70632474901/d1e800a9-4c1b-44bc-8a11-9ad6ab5f4310.pdf>.