

NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 724: Employment Discrimination - Caregiver Status

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) works to win respect, recognition, and labor rights and protections for the nearly 2.5 million nannies, housecleaners, and homecare workers who do the essential work of caring for our loved ones and our homes. NDWA's DMV Chapter brings together domestic workers from the DC, Maryland and Virginia region.

Every day, domestic workers do the work that makes all other work possible. They are the nannies that care for our children, the house cleaners that bring order to our home, and the care workers that ensure our loved ones can live with dignity and independence. The majority of domestic workers sit at the center of some of our nation's most decisive issues because of who they are and what they do: they are women – mostly women of color, immigrants, mothers, and low-wage workers. They are impacted by almost every policy affecting the future of our economy, democracy and country.

HB 724 would amend Maryland's employment anti-discrimination law to add "caregiver status" as a protected class, prohibiting discrimination against workers and job applicants because of their current or perceived responsibilities to care for a dependent family member or loved one in a "familial relationship" as determined by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR).

Under current Maryland law, employers are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, military status, or disability. However, there is no explicit protection against discrimination for individuals who provide care to family members, children, aging parents, or other dependents.

Without such protections, caregivers, predominantly women, face significant workplace bias. Employers may deny promotions, reduce hours, or refuse to hire applicants they perceive as less "flexible" due to caregiving responsibilities. Studies show that "family responsibilities discrimination" disproportionately affects women, single parents, and employees of color, who are more likely to shoulder caregiving burdens for children, elders, and family members with disabilities.

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Maryland, by contrast, provides no such protection, leaving workers vulnerable to bias for simply fulfilling family or caregiving duties.

Adding “caregiver status” to Maryland’s anti-discrimination law would align the state with national best practices and reinforce the constitutional principle that all Marylanders are entitled to equal opportunity and economic security regardless of family structure or caregiving role

There is a clear benefit to communities of color. Communities of color in Maryland, particularly Black and Latina women, shoulder a disproportionate share of family caregiving responsibilities while simultaneously facing higher risks of employment discrimination tied to caregiving. This inequity is well documented in national research on family caregiving and workplace bias.

Members of NDWA’s DMV Chapter include professional caregivers as well as workers who juggle paid employment alongside caregiving responsibilities at home. They understand firsthand the economic strain and workplace bias that can arise from these dual roles.

Without explicit legal protections, these intersecting barriers perpetuate cycles of economic insecurity, particularly among Black, Latina, and immigrant women who serve as primary breadwinners and caregivers.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 724.