

NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

Comments in Support of HB1129 *Maryland Medical Assistance Program- Provider Agencies- Wages and Leave for Personal Care Aides*

Health Committee

March 3, 2026

Dear Chair Bagnall and members of the committee,

My name is Teofila Liriano and I've been a home care worker since 2005. Over the years, I've worked in different states including New York, Virginia and Maryland. I've had to juggle multiple home care jobs at the same time to make ends meet, working anywhere from 24 to 60 hours per week. In 2017, after the birth of my son, I had to reduce the number of hours I worked.

I take great pride in my work because home care is essential to preserving dignity for those who depend on us. I prepare meals according to each client's dietary needs and preferences, maintain a clean and safe living environment, and assist with bathing, hygiene, grooming, and dressing. I remind clients to take medications and carefully monitor and document vital signs such as blood pressure and blood sugar. For clients undergoing dialysis or living with cancer, I track diaper changes and measure urine output to support proper health monitoring. Many of the individuals I serve are fully dependent and require complete assistance with daily activities, which demands responsibility, compassion, and professionalism. Every task I perform contributes directly to my clients' well-being and comfort.

Even though I work and know the value of my job, I rely on public programs to help me and my son survive. My son, who is 5 years old and was diagnosed as autistic,

depends on Medicaid for his health insurance. We also use food stamps to help cover the cost of food.

I'm a single mom- if my wages were better, me and my son could be more independent and not rely on public programs. I take him to and from school every day. I'm constantly forced to choose between working enough to make ends meet and being present to care for my son the way he needs. Right now, I spend my entire salary on the expenses related to my son's therapy. That means money for gas because I drive him there, and the little I earn goes toward small comforts for him because keeping his routine is crucial for his autism. If my wages were better, I would be able to spend more time with my son without sacrificing the pay I receive.

Paid sick time is also important for me and my family. In December, my son and I got sick with the flu, and I had to go to work wearing a mask. When was the last time you all had the flu and had to work a whole shift? I had to choose between working while sick or going without food for myself and my son. Care workers like me deserve to recover from illness and not put our clients in harm's way- this is the caring system we all need. Wages in Maryland need to go up and we deserve sick time as well. Many home care workers are forced to leave this field and find work somewhere else just to survive. Seniors in this country will suffer and will be the ones to feel our absence the most. This situation will continue to undermine the importance of the work we do, allowing the exploitation of many home care workers to persist. We give our patients so much love and support, doing everything possible to keep them comfortable and to give them the dignity they deserve. And without us, who will be there to care for our patients?

I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB1129 for a path to better wages, sick time, and better care for those who depend on us. Thank you.

Submitted via:

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/MyMGATracking/WitnessSignup>