

March 3, 2026

Chair and Members of the Health Committee
Maryland General Assembly

RE: Support for HB1280 – Supporting Our Caregiver Infrastructure Program – Feasibility Study
(Sponsored by Delegate Jamila Wims and Senator Cheryl C. Kagan King*)

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of **HB1280– Supporting Our Caregiver Infrastructure Program - Feasibility Study**, which directs the Maryland Comptroller’s Office to conduct a feasibility study on providing direct monthly payments to family caregivers.

While I am one of the Co-Chairs of the Commission on Aging for Montgomery County, who supported this bill, it is my personal experience as a parent and caregiver of a son, who as an infant had significant heart problems, that brings me to submit this testimony. I live in Montgomery County.

In 1992, my wife and I adopted a 5-month-old baby from Russia. We were aware of the possibility of some potential intellectual and development problems because his birthmother drank and smoked during pregnancy. It wasn’t until we came back home with our baby and after several doctors’ examinations, that we also became very aware of his undiagnosed heart problem. The doctors found that our baby had an Aortic Coarctation, a narrowing of the aorta, causing him to have a very weak pulse in his lower body and legs. This condition would eventually cause his death at an early age. Within 3 months on bringing our son home, he was lying in an operating room at Boston Children’s Hospital having open heart surgery to repair the aorta. The surgery was successful and the long-term caregiving began.

Following the surgery my son needed lots of care and lots of therapy to bring him into a normal age-appropriate physical range. My wife took a one-year leave of absence from her job as a teacher to care for our son. This meant not only a one-year loss of wages, but also a loss of one-year contribution to her state teacher pension plan. With a new baby and a new house, the loss of one of our incomes was stressful. We managed; however, some level of direct monthly support would have been very beneficial during this time.

HB1280– Supporting Our Caregiver Infrastructure Program - Feasibility Study bill addresses an area of great interest to me, based on my very real personal experience. I have no doubt that there are other caregivers who have had to put a pause in their regular income stream to take care of a loved one, be it an older parent or a young child. The study is an important first step in understanding the real costs of family caregiving and who it really impacts. My hope is that it can lead to changes in the way we value and support family caregivers.

For these very person reasons, I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on HB1280.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to Maryland families and thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Wayne Berman