

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,

Good afternoon, my name is Monique Lynch, and I've been a direct care worker for six years. I got into caregiving by accident. Initially, I was just helping my friend run her facility, but I quickly fell in love working hands-on with patients. I've always had a passion for caregiving, especially because I've been a long-term caregiver for my 22-year-old brother with special needs who still lives at home with my family.

I have worked in different kinds of care settings, but I am doing home care now. What I love most about my job is spending time with seniors and hearing their life stories. I love building relationships with my patients and learning from their experiences. I've worked with children before, but my calling and fulfillment comes from working with seniors.

I've seen firsthand how working conditions affect the quality of care for my patients. Because home care is a one-on-one setting, I am able to build stronger bonds with my patients and give them the attention and care that they deserve. Facilities are often understaffed which affects the type of care patients receive.

However, being a home care worker comes with its challenges. The pay is not enough to live on, and job security is always uncertain. Whenever a patient is hospitalized, when they pass away, or when they lose coverage of their insurance, we are left without a job and no means of paying our bills. I often juggle multiple cases and work six days a week, sometimes working two jobs just to make ends meet.

Higher wages and better benefits are important to me because they would help me cover the cost of my medical bills and food. Currently, I rely on SNAP benefits and food banks to afford groceries. I often have to choose between paying for my prescriptions and buying food.

Because of the work we do, family members can go to work knowing their loved ones are being cared for. I'm proud to give families that peace of mind. However, direct care workers don't have that same peace of mind. When I became sick, I and couldn't afford to take time off. Having paid sick leave would have allowed me to rest and recover without worrying about lost income.

I've been fortunate to see the difference I make in my patients' lives. I once had a patient who was homeless for years. We built so much trust in our relationship, that I was the only one he would listen to. His nurse and social worker would call me sometimes to convince him to go to his doctor's appointments. I always go above and beyond for my patients because they deserve the best.

Right now, there are not enough direct care workers to meet the needs of people who need home care. Direct care workers like myself find it challenging to stay in the field, because of the low wages that are determined by Medicaid payment rates and the lack of job security. Maryland should ensure that patients are receiving the care that they need, and that starts with retention of the direct care workforce.

Better pay and sick time would keep more home care workers in this field. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 1129 for a path to better wages and sick time for home care workers. Thank you.

Submitted via:

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