

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 Cynthia Lattisaw. My journey with caring for others began with my own family. I cared for my husband for 18 months while working full time. I went to work during the day and came home to take care of him at night. When my husband got sick, he needed around the clock care. And, like many others, he wanted to be at home, where he felt most comfortable and at peace, instead of going to a nursing home. I did everything I could to honor that. Taking care of him helped me realize my passion to help others.

After COVID, in 2021, I applied for a home care position. An agency contacted me looking to hire me, but I turned them down when they told me their starting rate was \$12 an hour. They could tell I was surprised at their starting rate, and justified the amount by saying, "That's what the state pays." It's been 5 years since that conversation, and I still remember how shocking it was to hear such a low pay rate. I have bills to pay and could not accept that reality, so I went to work with patients who pay out of pocket. Who can survive on \$12 an hour?

I believe everyone deserves high quality care, regardless of whether they can afford to pay out of pocket or rely on Medicaid. We can't guarantee quality care because too many workers are leaving the field, or choose to work for private pay patients. This has resulted in a broken care system where there are not enough home care workers for the patients that need them.

I love my job. I've had beautiful experiences with patients and some difficult ones, but I value the relationships I build with them. When I show up with a smile, it changes their entire day. We become like family. I go above and beyond for them. I have spent holidays like Christmas and New Year's with my patients instead of my own family because I don't want them to spend their holidays by themselves.

The sacrifices we make and the role we play in others' lives don't match our pay.

Even though it is 2026, the wages for Medicaid-funded home agencies are not enough to sustain myself or my family. If they were, I would gladly work with one. Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to rise, and more people are relying on home care. Unfortunately, "a thank you" does not pay our bills.

Paid sick time is just as important. Paid sick leave would protect both workers and clients. It would allow caregivers to rest, recover, and avoid spreading illness to the very people who are most at risk.

When my mom needed around-the-clock care after her health began to decline last year, she entered a nursing home where she developed a wound which then got infected with sepsis. She was never the same after that wound. She passed away a couple of months later. It reminded me how vital one-on-one care is to the quality of care patients receive. Seniors and individuals with disabilities deserve better care and greater investment in home-based services.

For these reasons, 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>