



Bill Title: HB1129- Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies - Wages and Leave for Personal Care Aides

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Health Committee

From: Erica Puentes, Legislative Coordinator on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Date: February 27, 2026

Dear Chair Bagnall and members of the House Health Committee,

Progressive Maryland is in strong support of House Bill 1129 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Provider Agencies - Wages and Leave for Personal Care Aides.

Progressive Maryland is a member-based power-building organization that centers the voices of working class, Black, and brown communities in our work to build a more just and equitable Maryland. We have over 125,000 members and supporters across the state, with significant bases in Baltimore City, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, Harford counties, and the Eastern Shore.

Maryland needs to take proactive steps to address the direct care workforce crisis and that begins with addressing low wages and the lack of benefits. HB 1129 puts meaningful steps in place to create higher standards for personal care aides and should be seriously considered by your committee.

HB 1129 would make three critical interventions in support of the workforce. First, it sets a minimum wage floor of \$17 per hour for all personal care aides (PCAs) employed by Medicaid-funded provider agencies. HB 1129 also extends paid sick and safe leave to all PCAs, regardless of employer size, and makes that sick and safe leave available up front. PCAs would be guaranteed 24 hours of paid sick and safe leave at the beginning of each calendar year or on their first day of employment. PCAs would then have the ability to accrue 1 hour of leave for every 30 hours worked after working 720 hours within a calendar year. Lastly, HB 1129 ensures Maryland meets requirements outlined in the 2024 CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid) Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services Final Rule. This bill directs the Maryland Department of Health to outline the steps necessary to reach a \$20 minimum wage and comply with a key provision in this rule; that at least 80% of the Medicaid payments they receive for personal care services be spent on worker compensation.

In the past few years, Maryland has enacted a number of pieces of legislation that build a better foundation for personal care aides. Our efforts in the Caring Across Maryland coalition have led to passing bills to eliminate misclassification in home care, collect comprehensive data on the workforce and state of home care, and create an advisory group made up of stakeholders tasked to make recommendations on the adequacy of Medicaid HCBS rates. Putting workers on a pathway to a living wage and extending paid leave benefits to them is the ultimate step Maryland can take to raise the quality of home care jobs and the quality of care that aides provide. There is no long term care system without the individuals who keep our loved ones safe and with dignity in their homes. **Progressive Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1129** to recognize the contributions of personal care aides, and to reflect the societal value they bring in their wages and benefits.