

## *Marylanders for Patient Rights*

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### **MARYLANDERS FOR PATIENT RIGHTS REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT ON HB1129 Wages and Leave for Personal Care Aides**

Marylanders for Patient Rights is a leading advocacy coalition for patients in our state, and we strongly support HB1129. As our population ages, with a large cohort of “boomers” needing more and more help from personal care aides (PCA), there are few incentives to retain or grow this vitally important workforce. Simply put, we are heading for a *healthcare train wreck* for elderly and vulnerable patients in Maryland.

HB1129 will address three vital interventions to support the PCA workforce. First, it sets a minimum wage floor of \$17 per hour for all PCAs employed by Medicaid-funded provider agencies. Frankly, I doubt that anyone reading this testimony would consider \$17 per hour a livable wage in the state of Maryland today.

Second, HB1129 extends paid leave and safe leave to all PCAs. This is of critical importance not only to PCAs, but also to their patients. I had the personal experience of a PCA needing to work while she had the flu. Subsequently, I caught that flu and was unable to attend to my elderly friend for several weeks. Sick leave for PCAs is not only good business, but it supports humane treatment of the workforce, and protection for patients and their caregivers. And third, HB1129 ensures that Maryland meets requirements outlined in the 2024 CMS Final Rule on Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services.

Moreover, the bill directs MDH to outline steps to reach a \$20 per hour minimum wage and to comply with the CMS provision that at least 80% of Medicaid payments received by agencies for personal care services be spent on worker compensation. I urge you to support HB1129 and help to value and retain this critical workforce.

Thank you,

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