



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475  
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269  
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmd  
facebook.com/aarpmd

**HB 1129 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Provider Agencies –  
Wages and Leave for Personal Care Aides  
House Health Committee  
March 3, 2026  
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 1129.

My name is Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland, one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, with approximately 850,000 members. We represent the interests of Maryland's over 50 population, including families who rely on personal care aides to remain safe, healthy, and independent in their homes. We are also a member of the Caring Across Maryland Coalition.

We urge you to support HB 1129 because consumers overwhelmingly want a stable, well-trained, and healthy workforce caring for them. In Maryland, the number of older adults is predicted to grow by 75 percent in the 30-year period from 2015 to 2045, from 837,500 to nearly 1.5 million. Maryland will not be able to retain workers or recruit new direct care workers to meet this growing need for in-home care without addressing low wages.

This bill helps achieve that by requiring provider agencies to pay personal care aides at least \$17 per hour and to provide written notice of the wage they are owed and the rate they will receive. Fair and transparent wages are essential for retaining skilled aides and reducing turnover, which directly affects the continuity and quality of care consumers receive.

HB 1129 also ensures Maryland meets requirements outlined in the 2024 CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid) Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services Final Rule, which put 80 percent as an appropriate requirement for how much Medicaid dollars must go towards compensation for direct care workers, essentially capping administrative overhead at 20 percent.

All states must comply with the rule by 2030. Residential Service Agencies receive about \$25.58 per hour from Medicaid to provide personal care services. Using the 80/20 rule, employers in Maryland can afford to pay their employees \$17 per hour and meet their employer obligations (wages, benefits, and the employer share of taxes) now. This bill enables the state to set a \$17-per-hour minimum wage to move to a higher living wage in the future.



HB 1129 also establishes a basic level of paid earned sick and safe leave, requiring provider agencies to grant 24 hours of paid leave at the start of each year or on the aide's first day of employment, along with additional leave earned after 720 hours of work. Consumers want care from aides who can stay home when they are ill without risking their livelihood. When workers are forced to come to work sick, the people they care for are placed at serious risk, especially older adults and individuals with chronic health conditions.

Additionally, the bill gives the Department of Health the authority to enforce these protections and take corrective action when provider agencies fail to comply. This accountability is critical for consumers who rely on a system that must function responsibly and transparently.

Quality care for aging and disabled individuals begins with a supported workforce. Low wages lead to high turnover, burnout, and interruption in care for those who need it. The only way to face the workforce crisis and stabilize our long-term care system is to pay workers a living wage, and protecting the workforce protects the people they care for.

On behalf of the many Marylanders who depend on personal care services, we respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1129.

Please contact Sara Westrick at [swestrick@aarp.org](mailto:swestrick@aarp.org) or 410-310-0374 with any questions.