

# 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 Estella Igus. I have been in the home care field for eight years. I am here today to speak in strong support of HB1129. Back in 2005, one of my daughters was diagnosed with Huntington's disease. As I watched her condition worsen, I knew she would receive better care at home, where she could have dignity and comfort. Around this time, I heard from friends that I could get paid for caring for a loved one at home. So I made the decision to care for her full time. So through my daughter's Medicaid, I was able to work through a home care agency to receive pay for taking care of my daughter.

But I've worked with other patients as well, not just my daughter. One of the first patients I had was an older woman with dementia. We built a strong bond. I would take her to her doctor's appointments and her doctor once told me that I was the best caregiver she had. Though that sentiment was heartwarming, I don't do this work for recognition- I do it because helping people is my passion.

This work comes with serious challenges, however. Home care is physically demanding and often isolating. I suffered a job-related injury, and two years ago I was diagnosed with arthritis in my back. I am constantly on my feet for work, which has made my back pain even worse.

I also live with epilepsy and have experienced seizures, including one at work. There have been days when muscle spasms made it difficult to get out of bed. Yet, without paid sick time, I feel forced to go to work because missing a shift means missing pay.

And while I love my job and make sacrifices for it, my job does not pay enough. I have worked two jobs just to afford rent, utilities, and food. At times, I have had to seek assistance from social services to keep my housing and I am also currently on Medicaid.

My daughter, who suffered from Huntington's disease, is no longer with us. But I am grateful that I got the opportunity to take care of her at home. Higher wages would allow me to better support the grandchildren she left behind and help ensure they can afford life's basic necessities without having to sacrifice my passion of taking care of others.

Caregivers show up every day for Maryland families. Patients are waiting for us, and we are eager to work. But we deserve fair wages, overtime pay, and paid sick leave. We deserve the ability to take care of our own families the same way we care for others.

Home care workers make it possible for people to age with dignity at home. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 1129.

*Submitted via:*

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