

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,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Emmanuel Aigbedion, and I am a home care worker. I am here to share my story and to speak on behalf of so many caregivers who work tirelessly every day to keep our communities safe and cared for.

I began my journey in home care after my brother, who works in the medical field, told me that home care was flexible and that workers were always needed. But for me, this work is more than just a job. I am an empathetic person by nature. I witnessed my parents' health declining until they passed away last year and I also helped take care of their unique needs; my father who lived with dementia and my mother who suffered a stroke. That experience deepened my understanding of how important compassionate, dignified care truly is.

What I love most about home care is the ability to put a smile on my patients' faces. I help keep people safe in their own homes. My daily responsibilities include helping clients transfer from wheelchair to bed, assisting with grooming and showering, washing their clothes and doing laundry, helping them use the toilet, and making sure they are clean and comfortable. I am there to preserve their dignity. I work to bring comfort to their lives and make their situations better, not worse.

But despite how essential and physically and emotionally demanding this job is, the biggest challenge we face are wages. Home care is intense, critical work, yet we are not paid appropriately. I am living paycheck to paycheck. I constantly worry about phone bills, rent, groceries, and transportation. These financial stresses should not distract me from providing quality care, but they do.

Sometimes I have to borrow money just to make ends meet. I rely on food stamps and Medicaid because I cannot afford basic necessities on my own. Even though I work very hard and care deeply for my clients, I cannot live a decent life on my current wages.

Better wages for me would mean less stress, more independence, and the ability to feel valued for the work I do. It would allow me to focus fully on my patients without

worrying about how I will survive.

Paid sick time is also critical. We are human beings. We are not robots. This job takes a physical and mental toll on our bodies. But if I go to work sick because I can't afford to miss a day, I am putting both myself and my patients at risk.

I have gone to work sick because I could not afford to miss a day. I have suffered injuries on the job. I have fallen. I have been assaulted by patients who were not fully aware of their actions. I have experienced racist comments, being told to "go back home" or "go back to Africa." Even in those moments, I remind myself to remain patient and empathetic.

Home care workers deserve better wages and paid sick time. We deserve to live with dignity just like the people we care for. When you support us, you are supporting seniors, people with disabilities, and families who depend on us every single day. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 1129.

Submitted via:

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