

Ricarra Jones, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East

Date: March 10, 2020

Committee: Economic Matters

Legislation: Testimony on HB 1415 – Guidance and Reporting for Residential Service Agencies

Position: Favorable

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones and I am the Director of Political Action for 1199SEIU. We represent 10,000 healthcare workers throughout Maryland and DC in hospitals, nursing homes and clinics. 1199 SUPPORTS HB 1415 and requests a favorable report by this committee.

This bill will address the shortage of personal care aides in the home care industry of Maryland by reducing the misclassification of these workers as independent contractors.

As representatives of healthcare workers and leaders in the “Fight for Fifteen,” 1199 has talked to many dedicated personal care aides who complain of poor wages and job quality. We also know that Residential Service Agencies are often wrongly misclassifying their personal care aides as 1099 independent contractors, rather than as employees. This practice results in making the conditions for these workers even worse: they lose overtime wages, travel-time wages and other benefits that they should be receiving as employees.

All of this is contributing to a workforce shortage for some of the most critical front-line healthcare workers in the state. Meanwhile, we know that Maryland will need a massive increase in this workforce in the next ten years.

This bill ensures that every RSA in Maryland has a plain language explanation of how our laws should be applied to personal care aides, and it also ensures that the state can track personal care aide wages using a real-time system.

Misclassification of workers hurts everyone. It hurts the workers who may not be receiving minimum wage, overtime pay or other critical benefits. And it hurts the clients of Residential Service Agencies, who are seeking care from a workforce that is stretched too thin because of poor pay and high turnover.

The oversight that this bill provides - over an industry funded by state money - will be a powerful first step to making sure that these jobs are decent jobs that allow workers to earn living wages.