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TO: The Honorable Dereck Davis, Chair  
Members, House Economic Matters Committee  
The Honorable Guy Guzzone

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman  
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DATE: March 23, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 307 – *Labor and Employment – Direct Care Workforce Innovation Program*

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On behalf of the LifeSpan Network, the Maryland Association of Adult Day Services (MAADS), and the Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association (MNCHA) we **support** Senate Bill 307. Members of the LifeSpan Network, MNCHA and MAADS provide post-acute care services to Maryland's elderly and disabled residents, many of whom are on Medicaid. Services are provided in a variety of settings, including nursing facilities, assisted living, and medical adult day centers. Senate Bill 307 establishes a Direct Care Innovation Program in the Department of Labor whose purpose is to provide matching grants to eligible entities to create and expand on successful recruitment and retention strategies that address the range of potential barriers to increasing the number of direct care workers.

Our workforce is the cornerstone of our operations. Prior to the declaration of the catastrophic health emergency brought on by COVID-19, Maryland was facing a workforce crisis due to several factors. Maryland's 60+ population is anticipated to increase from 1.2 million to 1.7 million by 2030, a 40% increase. This demographic shift impacts Maryland's post-acute care settings in two ways. First, the increasing senior population increases the need for services, which then increases the need for direct care workers. According to the Maryland Regional Direct Services Collaboration, Maryland will need approximately 40% more direct care workers to meet this increased need for care. Second, the increasing senior population will have a negative effect on the availability of direct care workers given that the primary labor pool for direct care workers are women aged 25-64, whose demographic is growing at less than one percent. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues and demonstrates the need for Maryland to commit to developing a robust direct care workforce.

Recognizing the need to be part of the solution, LifeSpan's education affiliate, the Beacon Institute, has been working since the summer with the Maryland Board of Nursing and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop an online training program for certified nursing assistants. LifeSpan is hopeful that the course will be approved and that it will give individuals flexibility to enroll in this training program, especially those that may have been displaced from other industries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, Senate Bill 307 will enable and encourage organizations to find innovative methods for increasing the number of direct care workers. We urge a favorable vote.