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MAYOR

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HB 1163

March 5, 2020

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1163 – Home- and Community-Based Waiver Services – Alterations and Task Force

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1163.

The Baltimore City Health Department's Division of Aging & CARE Services Home- and Community-Based Options Waiver Support Planning Unit provides support services to 530 medically-fragile individuals in Baltimore City. The participants who receive these services range in age from infancy to over 100 years old. The participants must have medical and functional issues to the extent that they would meet the requirements of a nursing home-level of care. The Home- and Community-Based Options Waiver services allow these participants to receive in-home services versus being admitted into long-term care settings, such as a nursing home. Since the inception of this program, it has afforded many individuals the opportunity to obtain vital care and support services that would not have been affordable to them.

The BCA supports HB 1163, with respect to assembling a task force to review the current process for eligibility and best practices. This task force would be charged with helping to streamline processes that will allow more individuals to become participants of this program. It also will help facilitate a process to eliminate the waiting list and make it more accessible to individuals.

The current enrollment process for individuals living in nursing homes and transitioning back into the community can take up to six months. Based on the length of time it takes to

complete the enrollment process, potential participants become frustrated and give up. This is unfair to them because as we all know, studies have found the people living in the community of their choice, live longer, prosperous lives.

While there are many facets to the program, the goal should always be how to provide optimal care to residents in the community of their choice, in the most cost-effective manner. There is a great need and always room for improvement in how to provide care to a medically-fragile population. The BCA hopes this task force will be able to facilitate expansion of the program and eliminate bureaucracy that participants have to endure.

For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 1163.