

HB 1163 – Home and Community Based Options Waiver Program

I'm Anita-Clay Stark and I am an Administrator of the Baltimore City Health Department Division of Aging & CARE Services Home- and Community Based Options Waiver - Support Planning Unit, which 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 & Community Based Options Waiver services allows these participants to receive in-home services versus being admitted into long term care setting, 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 Baltimore City Health Department 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 a 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, our goal should always be how we provide optimal care to constituents in the community of their choice, in the most cost-effective manner. There is a great need and always room for improvement of how we provide care to a medically fragile population. We hope this Task Force will be able facilitate achieving expansion of the program and eliminating bureaucracy that participants have to endure. It is a life saver for some and a relief for those family members whose loved ones are being afforded a chance to live their best days with those they love.

For the foregoing reasons, we support HB 1163 and respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.

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