



CARE BRAVELY

HB33 – Criminal Law – Abuse or Neglect of a Vulnerable Adult – Causing Severe Emotional Distress

House Judiciary Committee – January 21, 2020

Testimony of Adam Rosenberg, Vice President, Violence Intervention and Prevention, LifeBridge Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

I write in SUPPORT of HB33. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital, Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital, and Grace Medical Center (formerly Bon Secours) in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital in Reisterstown; and Carroll Hospital. It also now proudly houses a comprehensive violence program that addresses violence through the lifespan, and includes the Baltimore Child Abuse Center, two domestic violence programs, street violence interruption programs, and an elder justice program. LifeBridge Health has undertaken a mission to respond to all community violence or abuse of our region's most vulnerable populations.

LifeBridge Health's elder justice program was created to provide an evidence-based approach to the growing -- but often overlooked -- problem of serious harm caused to older adults by family, caregivers and other trusted adults. The project convenes a multi-disciplinary team of experts, including forensic interviewers, law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals to review cases to identify gaps in services and systemic improvements that will better protect Maryland's senior and vulnerable populations.

Expand definitions of abuse to provide better elder care. LBH supports HB33, because we know that one of the most common tactics abusers use against vulnerable elders is fear. Anxiety caused by psychological abuse reduces an older adult's quality of life, physical health and even their life expectancy.

Provide the safety of any animals owned by vulnerable adults. Threatening or harming an older person's beloved pet is a powerful tool to create fear as a form of control, to vent frustration over caretaking responsibilities, or even to extract financial assets. The Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging claims animal cruelty or neglect in the home of an older adult can often also be a warning sign of elder abuse situations. HB33 therefore responds to animal cruelty and elder abuse warning signs for better reporting.

Addressing new technological dangers for elder adults. The new face of elder abuse belongs to social media and cell phone technology as a way to take advantage of vulnerable older individuals. First stemming from the growing reports regarding nursing homes around the country, elder abuse and exploitation has been seen on many different social media platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram. Elder abuse on social media varies from sharing unauthorized, abusive or demeaning photos to using, sharing, or selling identity or financially private information. By factoring in the risk of digital abuse on social media, HB33 will provide more protections to vulnerable citizens who otherwise should not have to be concerned of this type of abuse.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB33.