



Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition

Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee
HB 745: Office of the Attorney General – Senior and Vulnerable Adult Asset Recovery Unit
Position: Favorable

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Judiciary Committee
Room 101, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
Cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chair Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances economic rights and financial inclusion for Maryland consumers through research, education, organizing, direct service, and advocacy. Our 8,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland. We are here today in strong support of HB 745.

MCRC works to protect the economic well-being of older adults through our Securing Older Adult Resources (SOAR) program. Seniors lose an estimated \$36 billion annually to financial exploitation.¹ Older adults are frequently targeted by IRS and social security scams, in which they are told they must pay a tax bill or be arrested; and unscrupulous contractors, who may “repair” a roof that was never damaged. They are also vulnerable to caregivers, both paid and familial, who take funds they are not entitled to, reasoning, “it’s payment for my services,” or “it will be mine eventually.”²

Older adults are particularly vulnerable to financial exploitation because their assets are fixed, and they do not have time to make up for losses with additional earnings. Law enforcement is struggling to keep up with the sheer volume of scams, and many instances of financial exploitation are in a gray legal area. In 2016, Maryland became one of only ten states throughout the country to form an Elder Justice Task Force. This effort was made to prevent seniors from falling prey to financial scams.³

HB 745 would establish and fund a Senior and Vulnerable Adult Asset Recovery Unit in the Office of the Attorney General. This unit would be responsible for protecting our state’s older adults from the types of financial fraud outlined above, and would dedicate individuals and resources to returning stolen money and property to seniors who have been victims of scams. This bill is an opportunity for the General Assembly to further protect Maryland’s aging population. We urge you to move favorably on HB 745.

Best,

Marceline White, Executive Director

¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/06/15/senior-citizens-lose-independence-billions-due-to-financial-exploitation/85926602/>

² *Ibid.*

³ <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/pr/departement-justice-charges-unprecedented-number-elder-fraud-defendants-nationwide-and>