



HB 745 - Office of the Attorney General - Senior and Vulnerable Adult Asset Recovery Unit
House Judiciary Committee
March 5th, 2020
SUPPORT

Chairman Clippinger, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 745. This bill will create a Senior and Vulnerable Adult Asset Recovery Unit under the Office of the Attorney General (OAG).

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy.

Currently, there are more elderly people today than in any other time in this country, and those with cognitive incapacities suffer 100% greater economic losses than those without.¹ Cognitive and physical limitations like dementia and trauma are some of the factors that make older adults particularly vulnerable to abuse. All seniors are frequent targets of scams and financial exploitation.

The Consumer Protection Division of the OAG defines financial exploitation as the misuse of another's money without their consent. Unfortunately, many vulnerable adults are taken advantage of by family members, caregivers, or businesses. Many times vulnerable adults are misled, threatened, or are unaware that they are being taken advantage of. Currently, there is not a dedicated unit for elder abuse. This means that there are elderly and vulnerable adults that receive delayed or limited help. This can lead to extreme financial hardship for vulnerable adults. The OAG is instrumental in protecting and even recovering lost assets for many of these individuals, and we should strengthen their ability to protect elderly Marylanders from financial harm.

HB 745 helps strengthens the OAG's ability to aid seniors by:

- Creating a separate unit with the OAG
- Funding the unit so it can be staffed and investigate and prosecute when needed

A dedicated unit should be established and funded within the OAG to focus on elderly victims of exploitation. The unit will bring civil actions against perpetrators, regardless of conviction status, to ensure that Maryland is protecting its elderly and vulnerable. This bill has also been endorsed as a priority of the Financial Education and Capability Commission.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report of House Bill 745.

¹ <https://ncea.acl.gov/About-Us/What-We-Do/Research/Statistics-and-Data.aspx#42>