

Testimony Before the Health and Government Operations Committee
SB 636 - Maryland Department of Health - Waiver Programs - Waitlist Reduction (End the Wait Act)
Support

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Maryland (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for SB 636 – Maryland Department of Health – Waiver Programs – Waitlist Reduction (End the Wait Act).

We support this bill because we know that most older adults and people with disabilities want to live in their homes and communities. Community living is also less expensive than other options for most people. Skilled nursing facilities can cost an average of \$75,000 a year and public residential facilities for people with disabilities average \$225,000 a year, according to the Administration for Community Living. The Maryland Waiver Programs consistently cost less per person than those institutional alternatives.

Social Workers have consistently advocated for the rights of adults to live in the least restrictive setting with supportive services like those offered by Maryland’s Waiver programs. These programs promote self-determination and autonomy, two core Social Work values.

Among those who would benefit from this legislation are the thousands of applicants who have been on the waitlists for Waiver programs for 4-8 years without even getting an opportunity to apply for services. An example of a family who would greatly benefit from the passage of SB 636:

Mrs. J is a 76 year old woman who lives with her 78 year old husband of 50 years in their home in Baltimore. Mrs. J was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia four years ago. Her husband has been her primary caregiver and they have two adult daughters who visit weekly to help with grocery shopping, laundry, and housekeeping. Mrs. J has been on the Home and Community-Based Services registry for three years. Over the past six months her condition has declined significantly, and her husband is exhausted, as her needs for assistance with bathing, dressing, feeding have increased. None of the family members can provide additional help, and the couple’s limited assets have been exhausted. Mr. J fears he will have to place his wife in a nursing home and has called to see where she is on the registry, only to be told “it’s going to be several months” before she may receive consideration for services.

Older Marylanders and those with disabilities deserve the opportunity to live in their communities with appropriate supports. This bill would give more Marylanders a chance to do that. We ask that you give a favorable report to SB 636.

Respectfully,

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