



576 Johnsville Road
Sykesville, MD 21784

TO: Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: House Bill 1149, Medicaid Waiver Programs – Waitlist and Registry Reduction
(End the Wait Act)
DATE: March 7, 2023
POSITION: **Favorable**

LeadingAge Maryland supports House Bill 1149, Medicaid Waiver Programs – Waitlist and Registry Reduction (End the Wait Act).

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 140 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Members of LeadingAge Maryland provide health care, housing, and services to more than 20,000 older persons each year. Our mission is to be the trusted voice for aging in Maryland, and our vision is that Maryland is a state where older adults have access to the services they need, when they need them, in the place they call home. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland.

Under this bill, the remaining funding of the appropriation made for Medicaid waiver expansions may be used for the purpose of hiring and retaining providers among the waiver programs. For some time, LeadingAge Maryland has urged expanded access to the Home and Community-Based Waiver which provides community services and supports to enable older adults and people with disabilities to live in their own homes. Maryland residents age 18 and over who need assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, grooming, dressing and mobility can apply.

There are both financial and health benefits of receiving care in the community. In fact, a 2013 study examined the impacts the length of home and community-based services wait lists on a variety of factors. The study notes that older applicants in general were disproportionately impacted by longer wait list times, and that “those with short wait times (versus long) had a 48

percent lower risk of having a long-term nursing home stay in the three years after application and had lower average Medicaid spending on long-term stays of \$111 per person per month”. (2013, ASPE). According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, in the US, individuals on these wait lists wait an average of 30 months before gaining access to services and supports, although there is significant variation based on the type of care or support an individual is seeking – some waiting more than 66 months (2019, Kaiser Family Foundation).

The Maryland Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Options Waiver (HCBOW) program can provide the needed services to Marylanders with disabilities at home. Maryland has permission from the federal government to grant 6,348 waivers for home and community-based services, but it only enrolls 4,286 residents. More than 25,000 residents sit on wait lists to be approved. In 2019, HCBOW served less than 5,700 individuals. When the MDH readjusts HCBOW program availability every few years, it does not count eligible people on the 8-year, 25,000-person waiting list. As long as Marylanders are unable to live at home and bypass the lengthy waiting list, their only option is entering a nursing home. This is costly and unnecessary. House Bill 1149 assists in ensuring that the workforce meets the needs of the individuals.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for House Bill 1149.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield, 410.446.1992