



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: March 25, 2024

Bill Number: **SB202**

Bill Title: Maryland Department of Aging - Caregiver Expense Grant Program - Established

Committee: House Appropriations

**MDOA Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

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The Department of Aging (MDOA) submits this letter of support with amendments for Senate Bill 202 - Maryland Department of Aging - Caregiver Expense Grant Program - Established.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) serves as Maryland's State Unit of Aging, administering federal funding for core programs, overseeing the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) network at the local level that provides services, and planning for Maryland's older adult population. MDOA currently administers two caregiver support programs: the National Family Caregiver Support Program<sup>1</sup> which provides funding to the AAAs for caregiver-focused assistance like counseling, support groups, training, and some direct respite care, as well as an evidence-based virtual hub for caregiver workshops.<sup>2</sup> MDOA also recently launched its dementia, cognitive and behavioral health navigation work at the state and AAA levels, to better serve older adults living with dementia, which a new caregiver grant program would fit seamlessly with in the future.

MDOA is supportive of this legislation's clear intent to support family caregivers. Investing in family caregivers of older adults provides direct return on investment, making Maryland more affordable, competitive and equitable. Investing in caregiver support enables caregivers to balance work with caregiving responsibilities, continue providing care for longer, delaying or preventing entrance into nursing home care for older adults. The 50-plus population in Maryland contributed \$2 billion in volunteering activities and \$18.7 billion in unpaid caregiving in 2018,

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<sup>1</sup> MDOA, National Family Caregiver Support Program, available at: <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/national-family-caregiver-support.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> MD Living Well Center for Excellence, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, available at: <https://mdlivingwell.org/programs/powerful-tools-for-caregivers/>



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with the average person spending 44 hours on volunteering and over 670 hours on caregiving over the entire year.”<sup>3</sup>

MDOA is supportive of this legislation’s creation of a new caregiver expense grant program within MDOA with some additional amendments:

- 1) Amending the “qualified family member” (the care recipient) **minimum age requirement from age 18 to age 60**, (p. 3) to better align with MDOA’s existing federally mandated and state-funded support programs. This narrowed focus on the caregivers of adults 60 and older best addresses Maryland’s demographic changes: Maryland’s population of adults aged 60 and older and 85 and older are growing fast and are of high priority to reach.
- 2) **Broadening the list of licensed health professionals who will certify that a qualified family member over 60 needs assistance with one or more daily activities to include** (p. 3) **licensed social workers, therapists, physical therapists, counselors**. Broadening this group of licensed health professionals who interact with older adults will reduce a barrier to access in recognition of the shortage of primary care and geriatrics physicians.
- 3) Adding a **purpose statement** and **flexibility** for MDOA to adopt a phased approach and/or tiers of grant awards and place-based focus (p. 3-4).

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a **favorable with amendments** report for SB202. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at [andrea.nunez@maryland.gov](mailto:andrea.nunez@maryland.gov) or (443) 414-8183.

Sincerely,

Carmel Roques  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Aging

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<sup>3</sup> AARP, The Longevity Economy Outlook, Maryland, available at: [https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys\\_statistics/econ/2020/longevity-economy-outlook-maryland.doi.10.26419-2Fint.00044.021.pdf](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/econ/2020/longevity-economy-outlook-maryland.doi.10.26419-2Fint.00044.021.pdf)



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