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HB 1176 Home- and Community-Based Services Waiver – Eligibility
House Health and Government Operations Committee
FAVORABLE
March 1, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Peña-Melnyk and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland advocates for two million Marylanders age 50 over. AARP Maryland supports HB 1176. We thank Delegate Cullison for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

House Bill 1176 will address longstanding concerns with the Home and Community Base Waiver's (HCBOW) waiting list/registry by doing the following:

- Establish standard policy for the Department of Health to allow a married couple to pool their assets to allow a spouse to meet waiver eligibility standards.
- Adjust the income cap to allow for more individuals to qualify financially if they are otherwise eligible for home and community-based services.
- Require the Department of Health to develop regulations specific to the population who are transitioning from Community First Choice to the HCBOW.

AARP believes that state governments should carefully assess their Long-Term Services and Support Systems (LTSS) and their ability to serve people in the most integrated setting the individual chooses.

AARP also believes that the State should:

- apply the principle that consumer choice and quality of life should drive the entire LTSS system;
- allocate a greater proportion of Medicaid funding for HCBS instead of nursing facility care;
- provide potential consumers with viable options for HCBS that will help divert people from nursing facility care either before admission or shortly thereafter; and
- Restructure their nursing facility Medicaid reimbursement system to ensure that it does not sustain excess capacity.

AARP believes Marylanders should be able to “age-in-place” in the settings of their choice and be provided services to avoid an unnecessary nursing home admission. That is NOT Happening in Maryland. The government continues to pay Medicaid for our elders in the most expensive setting when people just want help to stay in their own homes or in a setting of their choice. The

HCBOW waiting list has been at issue for more than decade and as the population ages, the worst it will become. It is time for the Maryland legislature to act to make up for lost time if it wants to give Marylanders the ability to age in place.

We ask the Committee for a favorable report on HB 1176. For questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.