

Testimony for Presentation Thursday, March 7, 2024 – 1:00 pm

By: Mark Heuer

Good morning, esteemed members of the Maryland Legislature. My name is Mark Heuer, and I am grateful to Delegate Cheryl Pasteur for the opportunity to speak about the significance of House Bill 1263. This bill is crafted with the intention of regulating Assisted Living Referral Agencies (ALRA) to safeguard the interests and welfare of senior citizens as they navigate the process of finding suitable assisted living communities.

The primary objective of this legislation is to establish regulations that govern Assisted Living Referral Agencies and to ensure the protection and well-being of seniors who are in search of appropriate living arrangements in assisted living communities. House Bill 1263 proposes that ALRAs must personally accompany and organize tours with representatives of assisted living communities. This provision aims to give prospective residents and their families the opportunity to familiarize themselves with different communities firsthand, enabling them to make informed decisions based on their experiences.

Currently, ALRAs distribution leads to numerous care communities, resulting in these communities reaching out to prospects to arrange tours and present the advantages of their facilities. Consequently, our senior population is bombarded with calls from multiple communities striving to attract them to move into their respective facilities. This continuous influx of calls can span over a long duration, originating from the various communities that have received leads from the Referral Agencies.

In alignment with Bill 1263, ALRAs are mandated to maintain a comprehensive database of authorized and approved assisted living communities. This measure is implemented to ensure that seniors are exclusively referred to reputable and licensed facilities, enhancing the level of security and quality of care provided to them.

While a few commendable referral agencies offer tours with client representation as part of their standards, challenges arise when communities receive leads from dominant online sources. In such scenarios, communities face the dilemma of coping with multiple placement fees. Once a lead is received from a prominent source, communities are constrained from considering alternative providers that may better serve the client, thus posing a barrier to fair competition in the placement process.

In conclusion, House Bill 1263 is intended to prioritize the well-being of seniors and their families during the assisted living placement journey. By mandating in-person tours and restricting the timeframe for fee payments to Assisted Living Referral Agencies. This legislation underscores the values of transparency, equitable practices, and the safeguarding of seniors in their quest for appropriate care facilities.