

Testimony Before the Senate Finance Committee

January 22, 2025

Senate Bill 212 – Department of Aging – Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation

**** Support with Amendment ****

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest professional association of social workers in the country, and the Maryland Chapter represents social workers across the state. On behalf of the NASW-MD Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support with one amendment for Senate Bill 212 Department of Aging – Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation.

As social workers, we are in favor of this bill because it consolidates and simplifies application for three key programs administered by the Maryland Department of Aging – Senior Care, Senior Assisted Living Subsidy, and Congregate Housing Services.

All of these programs are vital supports for seniors who need help to meet their basic needs while they live in the least restrictive environment possible. The Senior Care program has been a lifeline for seniors living in the community who need help with personal care, chores, transportation, adult day care and other services. Congregate Housing subsidy allows people in senior apartments to receive assistance with meals, personal care and household chores. Senior Assisted Living subsidy subsidizes the monthly cost of assisted living for those who could otherwise not afford this level of care.

Currently, each program operates independently, and each has its own application process and eligibility criteria. This presents some barriers for potential clients, and burdens for the Area Agencies on Aging that administer the programs. In addition, declining participation by clients and/or providers in some programs make it challenging to serve the maximum number of people across all three programs. Consolidating the programs could result in enhanced administrative efficiencies and, potentially, a greater number of elders served.

It is vital to add a “hold harmless” amendment to the bill to ensure that current participants in Senior Care, Senior Assisted Living Subsidy and Congregate Housing Services would keep the services they currently have.

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In many jurisdictions across Maryland, there are wait lists for these three programs, and many elders who desperately need these services may never receive them. It is our hope that the reorganization proposed by SB 212 would allow more elders to receive the supports they need and deserve.

For these reasons, we ask that you give a favorable report on Senate Bill 212 with one amendment.

Respectfully,

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