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Date: January 20, 2025

Bill Number: SB 212

Bill Title: Department of Aging – Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation

Committee: Finance

Submitted by: Camille Dobson, Deputy Executive Director

Position: FAVORABLE

ADvancing States was founded in 1964 and represents the nation’s 56 officially designated state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities. ADvancing States membership is comprised of state aging and disability agencies and Medicaid long term services and supports directors. In Maryland, our members include both the Maryland Department of Aging and the Maryland Department of Health.

ADvancing States has been providing intensive technical assistance to Secretary Roque and her team as they evaluate their current program and operations with the goal of modernizing and standardizing their programs to serve more older Marylanders more efficiently, effectively and equitably with appropriate supportive services in their homes. This is particularly critical as the number of Marylanders aged 65 and older is projected to grow significantly over the next decade; in fact, by 2030, fully 25 percent of all Marylanders will be over the age of 65. Americans overwhelmingly desire to “age in place”—to stay in their homes as long as possible. The desire to age in place is



stronger among older Americans, with 80% of those born before 1960 and 92% of those born before 1945 wishing to remain in their communities for as long as possible.

ADvancing States brings a national perspective to the table as MDOA discusses program modernization. Typically, older adults must have significant functional decline and have very low incomes to access services through Medicaid that might help them stay in their homes longer. A national trend identified by ADvancing States is that about a quarter of the states are using state GF to deliver 'light-touch' home and community-based services to older adults before they need the more intensive – and expensive – services from Medicaid. Those states include Washington, Oregon, West Virginia, Kentucky and Indiana. Serving Marylanders before they have significant functional impairments and could remain at home with a more limited set of supports can delay decline to Medicaid eligibility.

We recommended that MDOA consolidate their state-funded programs (SALS, Congregate Housing Services Program, and Senior Care) into a new, streamlined program that would focus on the most effective services to keep older Marylanders in their home and provide flexibility to the Area Agencies on Aging to meet the needs of older adults in their communities on a person-centered basis. We are delighted to support HB 36 and the creation of the Supporting Older Adults with Resources (SOAR) program.

We look forward to supporting MDOA as they begin the design, planning and implementation of SOAR this summer.