

DATE: March 20, 2025

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 212

TITLE: Department of Aging – Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

Senate Bill 212 combines the Department of Aging’s Congregate Housing Services Program, Senior Assisted Living Subsidy Program, and Senior Care Program into a new single program: Supporting Older Adults With Resources (SOAR). The bill also repeals the Interagency Committee on Aging Services, which has been inactive since 2014 and has been supplanted by the Department of Aging’s Longevity Ready Maryland initiative.

Background and Analysis:

The three programs consolidated by this bill – the Congregate Housing Services Program, Senior Assisted Living Subsidy Program, and Senior Care Program – assist thousands of older Marylanders by providing in-home and community support including food, laundry, personal care, transportation, and home repair, along with financial assistance for older adults in assisted living facilities. Their combined budget is about \$21 million annually.

Older adults are a vulnerable population who face numerous challenges when it comes to independent living. Fixed incomes and disabilities can make it difficult to remain in a safe, comfortable home environment. The rapidly rising costs of assisted living are often far more than seniors can afford. Consolidating these existing programs into the SOAR program will reduce the administrative burden and operational costs associated with them, allowing more older Marylanders to be served. As the state’s older adult population is expected to significantly increase in coming years, this improvement in efficiency is much needed.

The bill will also strengthen the local Home and Community Based Services network by standardizing eligibility, benefits, performance metrics, and data systems across the existing programs. Key stakeholders will have an opportunity to assist in the design, planning and implementation of SOAR before the bill’s effective date of July 1, 2026.

DHCD Position

The improvements to efficiency in the Department of Aging’s programs for older Marylanders will increase the amount and quality of care for beneficiaries, and help older Marylanders remain housed, whether in independent or assisted living settings. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 212.