



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

January 23, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building 240
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON HB0158 - DEPARTMENT OF AGING - SOCIAL CONNECTIONS PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Operations Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report for House Bill 158 (HB 158).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS empowers Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities. Our Social Services Administration implements the Adult Protective Services (APS) program affected by HB 158. The bill renames the Senior Call-Check Service and Notification Program and establishes the Social Connections Program, providing a service to older adults reducing social isolation.

The Social Connections Program offers older adults who might be more susceptible to social isolation a regular social connection and shares information about opportunities for engagement in the community. Older adults who are connected to a social network are less likely to be influenced to their detriment and victimized. There is substantial data and research supporting the positive impact of social connections on health and well-being, especially for the Marylanders we serve through our APS program. According to the Center for Disease Control, social connections can lead to longer, healthier lives by reducing the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, dementia, depression, and anxiety.¹

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/social-connectedness/about/index.html>

We appreciate the opportunity to offer favorable testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López
Secretary