

TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

HB158
Favorable

FROM: Annie Coble
Assistant Director, Maryland Government Affairs

DATE: January 22, 2025

RE: HB158 Department of Aging – Social Connections Program - Establishment

Johns Hopkins supports **HB158 Department of Aging – Social Connections Program - Establishment**. This bill expands the communications and service options for the Senior Call Check Service and Notification Program so it can meaningfully engage with more older adults and be more accessible to people with disabilities. Johns Hopkins treats hundreds of patients that would benefit from this program.

Research conducted by Johns Hopkins University of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health provided evidence that social isolation is a substantial risk factor for dementia in community-dwelling older adults.¹ Interventions to reduce that risk are possible, according to results of the second study, published Dec. 15 in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. Specifically, researchers found the use of communications technology such as telephone and email lowered the risk for social isolation.

The Social Connections program created by this legislation will provide the necessary communication to lower the risk of social isolation. The program will provide a outreach to seniors in an accessible and comprehensive way. The program will result in better peace of mind for vulnerable adults and their families.

Johns Hopkins is committed to providing the highest quality clinical care to improve the health of older adults and society by creating, translating and disseminating knowledge through information. The Social Connections Program aligns with this commitment.

Accordingly, Johns Hopkins respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on **HB158**.

¹ <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/2023/01/new-studies-suggest-social-isolation-is-a-risk-factor-for-dementia-in-older-adults-point-to-ways-to-reduce-risk>