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SB 347 Adult Protective Services – Investigation and Disclosure of Information
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 28, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. My name is Tammy Bresnahan. I am the Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of, **SB 347 Adult Protective Services – Investigation and Disclosure of Information** which seeks to strengthen protections for vulnerable adults by authorizing local departments of social services to request assistance from federal law enforcement officers during investigations and by expanding provisions relating to the disclosure of information in adult protective services cases.

As you are aware, vulnerable adults—those who may be elderly, disabled, or otherwise unable to advocate for themselves—often face unique risks, including abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The proposed changes in this legislation are critical to ensuring their safety and well-being.

Key Provisions of the Bill

1. Authorization to Request Federal Law Enforcement Assistance

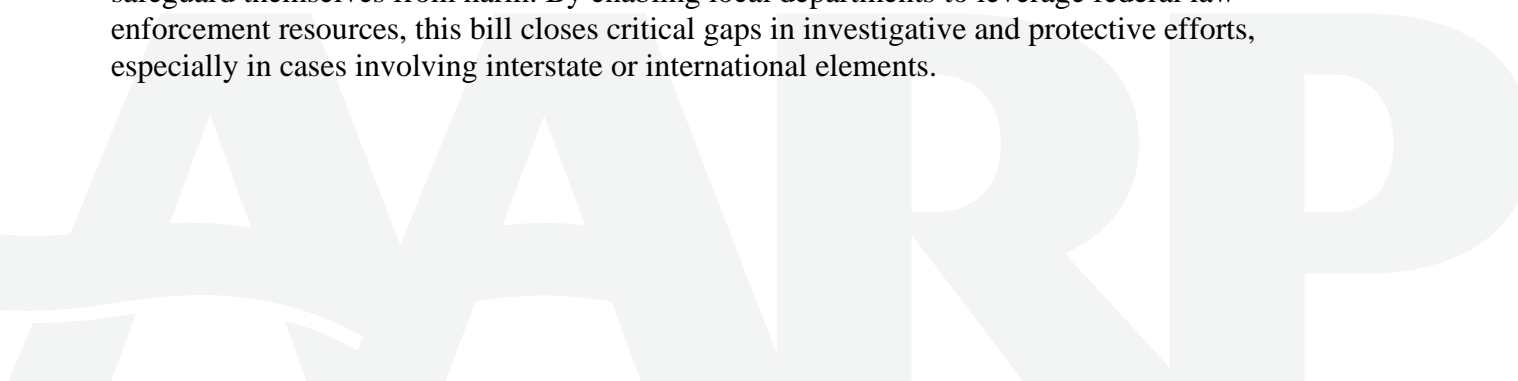
This legislation empowers local departments of social services to collaborate with federal law enforcement officers in investigations involving vulnerable adults. This provision is essential in cases where federal expertise, jurisdiction, or resources are required to address cross-state or complex criminal activity, such as financial exploitation schemes, human trafficking, or internet-based abuse.

2. Enhanced Information Sharing

By amending existing provisions to include adult protective services within the scope of allowable disclosures, this bill ensures that necessary information can be shared with relevant agencies. Timely and accurate information sharing is pivotal for thorough investigations, coordinated responses, and effective interventions to protect vulnerable adults.

Why This Legislation Matters

Protecting vulnerable adults is not merely a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative. Many adults who fall under the protection of adult protective services lack the capacity or resources to safeguard themselves from harm. By enabling local departments to leverage federal law enforcement resources, this bill closes critical gaps in investigative and protective efforts, especially in cases involving interstate or international elements.



Additionally, the expansion of disclosure provisions balances the need for privacy with the urgent necessity of ensuring safety. It allows for appropriate information sharing among trusted agencies, preventing delays that could jeopardize an individual's well-being.

The Broader Impact

By passing this legislation, Maryland will reaffirm its commitment to protecting its most vulnerable residents. This bill demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing abuse and neglect and sends a clear message that we are unified in our efforts to hold perpetrators accountable while prioritizing the safety of those at risk.

Closing

In closing, I respectfully urge the Committee to support SB 347. This legislation provides vital tools to enhance the protection of vulnerable adults, strengthens partnerships between local and federal agencies, and ensures that our social services can act effectively and swiftly in the face of complex challenges. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have questions or need follow up, please contact me at tbresnahan@arp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.