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**HB 671 - Nursing Facilities – Medicaid Quality Assessment –
Funding of the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Appropriations Committee
March 10, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Roxann Montgomery. I live in Howard County, and I am a member of the AARP Maryland volunteer advocacy team. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 671, which will create more stable and predictable funding for the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Thank you to Delegate Shetty and Delegate Lopez for sponsoring this important legislation.

I was a hands-on caregiver for my parents for 8 years in their home. For several years, I hired overnight caregivers, but they were not keeping my parents safe at night. After my father had a stroke, I realized that I couldn't provide safe care for them around the clock in their home. I believed my only choice was to move them to a 24-hour care facility. That decision began a 2- and 1/2-year period where I was an eyewitness to repeated occurrences of dangerously inadequate care in long-term care facilities.

My folks progressed from the "memory care" unit at an assisted living to the rehab wing of a nursing home, to the long-term wing of that same nursing home. Each of these facilities was consistently understaffed, undersupplied, and minimally supervised. As a result, I spent 14 to 24 hours a day caring for my folks (mostly my mom) in these facilities. I regularly checked that my mom was receiving her medications and not those of her roommate. I fed her, changed her, and made sure she had clean oxygen tubing that wasn't full of condensation. I discussed issues with the charge nurse, who generally wouldn't look up from the desk, but would hand me a paper form to fill out and drop in a box for management to resolve the next day. The floor manager was rarely on the floor, but I would email her about unresolved issues. I never got a response.

When a family emergency occurred, and I had to be out of state for 48 hours, I came back to find that my mom had been put on a broad-spectrum antibiotic. I asked the floor nurse why, since I was unaware my mom had been seen by a doctor. The nurse had no information about when the doctor saw my mom or what the diagnosis was. At this point, I contacted the long-term care Ombudsman's office in Howard County.

The Ombudsman was attentive, polite, and professional, and collected all relevant details from me. They explained that the office would investigate the issue and notify the appropriate authorities if they could not resolve the problem. Within a short period of time, I saw multiple inspectors physically come onto my mom's floor and audit scores of notebooks containing the

medical records at the nurses' station. Later, I checked the CMS Nursing Home Compare website and saw that a complaint inspection had been conducted at my mom's nursing home, and I read the online report.

The report documented that the audit found issues with the medical records of multiple residents. Neither my identity nor my mom's name was listed in the report (which protected us from possible retribution), but the details of the complaint matched those I had reported to the Office of the Ombudsman. Ultimately, I learned that a nurse had been unable to read a prescription that was handwritten by the nursing home's doctor, so the nurse made a best guess at the illegible name of the patient when the nurse typed up the order.

Long-term care is an area where most consumers have very little familiarity and very little leverage when sub-adequate care is provided. Ombudsmen evaluate, educate, resolve conflicts, and, when necessary, report issues to the appropriate state agencies. They work to bring productive outcomes for consumers in need, for providers who deliver good care, and for oversight agencies who benefit from the ombudsman's groundwork in analyzing and documenting vetted issues with care.

Stable, predictable funding for long-term care ombudsman is essential. With that thought in mind, I request a favorable vote on HB 671.