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March 6, 2026

To: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee

From: Irnise F. Williams, Deputy Director, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: House Bill 671 – Nursing Facilities – Medicaid Quality Assessment – Funding of
Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman - **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

The Office of the Attorney General’s Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) submits a letter of information on HB671. This bill provides a stable state funding stream for the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman by requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill at least 3% of the special funds collected from the Medicaid quality assessment imposed on certain nursing facilities to help fund the operations of the Office.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is an advocacy program for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Maryland. From the [Program’s annual FY2024](#) report:

Authorized under the Older Americans Act, the Maryland Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for the health, safety, well-being, and rights of residents living in assisted living and nursing homes. Ombudsmen work at the direction of the resident and only take action with the resident’s consent. In Maryland, there are 220 nursing homes and 1,622 licensed assisted living homes totaling over 53,907 long-term care beds.

In FY2024, 3,312 complaints were investigated, verified and resolved by Long-Term Care Ombudsmen. 84% of complaints were resolved to the satisfaction of the residents.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a critical safeguard for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Regular visits by ombudsmen ensure that residents understand their rights and have access to advocacy and support when issues arise. While facilities usually strive to provide quality care and quality of life, many residents have complex medical and psychosocial needs that cannot always be fully met by the facility alone. These gaps often lead to serious

concerns that require time, expertise, and independent investigation—services the Ombudsman Program uniquely provides.

The importance of this program is underscored by findings from the [Government Accountability Office](#), which highlight several challenges:

- Increasing complexity of resident needs, including mental health, substance misuse, and cognitive impairment, which require specialized advocacy and resources.
- Growth in the number of assisted living facilities, significantly expanding the workload for ombudsmen.
- Resource limitations, including funding and staffing shortages, make it difficult to meet demand and maintain effective oversight.

Additionally, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is facing significant federal funding threats, making the program dependent on political conditions. Federal funding had been flat for many years. Maryland’s aging population is projected to grow significantly over the next two decades. Without adequate, sustainable funding of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, many older Marylanders may lack access to critical resources and advocacy needed to navigate the challenges of living in assisted living facilities or nursing homes.

Without adequate funding, residents risk losing access to a vital resource that protects their rights, addresses complaints, and ensures accountability in long-term care settings. Investing in the Ombudsman Program is not optional, it is essential to uphold the dignity, safety, and well-being of some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for considering this information as you review HB671.

cc: Delegate Emily Shetty
Delegate Lesley J. Lopez