



# *Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network*

## **MSCAN**

*AARP Maryland*

*Baltimore Jewish Council*

*Catholic Charities of Baltimore*

*Central Maryland Ecumenical Council*

*Church of the Brethren*

*Episcopal Diocese of Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County*

*Lutheran Office on Public Policy in Maryland*

*Maryland Association of Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic Conference*

*Mental Health Association of Maryland*

*Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan*

*National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter*

*Presbytery of Baltimore*

*The Coordinating Center*

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The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that support policies that meet the housing, health, and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

**MSCAN supports HB 671.** Older adults in Maryland deserve safe, high-quality long-term care and access to an independent advocate when concerns arise. HB 671 strengthens the Maryland Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program by requiring the Governor to allocate at least 3% of revenues from the Medicaid Nursing Facility Quality Assessment to support Ombudsman operations. This modest, reliable funding source is critical to protecting the health, safety, dignity, and rights of long-term care residents.

The Ombudsman Program is a federally mandated service under the Older Americans Act, operating statewide to advocate for more than 54,000 Marylanders living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Demand for Ombudsman services continues to grow alongside the state's aging population. In FY25 alone, ombudsmen made 7,252 visits, provided 7,013 instances of information and assistance, and investigated and resolved 3,978 complaints made by or on behalf of residents. These activities are essential to ensuring resident rights, resolving concerns quickly, and supporting facility staff in maintaining high-quality care.

Despite these critical responsibilities, the Ombudsman Program has been flat-funded for more than a decade, even as the number and complexity of resident needs have increased. Maryland must ensure a stable, state-level funding stream to protect residents and maintain essential advocacy services. HB 671 will provide this stability. The Nursing Home Quality Assessment generated approximately \$194 million in FY24 and is matched 50% by federal funds. HB 671 will reinvest a small portion of existing dollars into safeguarding residents and supporting early conflict resolution, abuse prevention, and systemic advocacy.

A well-resourced Ombudsman Program benefits the entire long-term care system. Ombudsmen help resolve issues before they escalate, reduce regulatory complaints, support families, and improve communication between residents and facilities. Research shows that states investing in their Ombudsman Programs see improved care outcomes and stronger resident protections.

For these reasons MSCAN urges a favorable report.