



Appropriations Committee

Chair, Health and
Social Services Subcommittee

Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB671

**Nursing Facilities - Medicaid Quality Assessment - Funding of Office of the Long-Term
Care Ombudsman**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and esteemed members of the House Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 671. This bill aims to strengthen protections for the health, safety, and welfare of vulnerable Marylanders residing in nursing facilities by redirecting a very small percentage of existing resources to the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

In 2025, Maryland ombudsmen resolved approximately 3,300 complaints from residents across nearly 7,000 nursing home visits.¹ They also investigated over 300 cases of abuse in the past year alone. Ombudsmen are the only free resource for aging Marylanders that uses an interpersonal approach to safely and confidentially address their needs and concerns. They advocate for the rights, dignity, and well-being of older adults in our state's 1,850 assisted living and nursing homes, but the demands of their work are increasing. Since 2016, resident complaints have increased by 15%, and the caseloads of individual ombudsmen across the country have nearly doubled from 350 to 603, according to a national study conducted by AARP.²

Over 54,000 Marylanders currently live in long-term care facilities across our state, and this number will grow as Maryland's population continues to trend older than the national average³. Between 2023 and 2024, the number of Marylanders aged 65 or older increased by 3.35%. Already, on a per capita basis, each of Maryland's one million residents over 65 receives only \$1.50 per capita in ombudsman services. This is far lower than neighboring jurisdictions:

¹Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. (no date) Maryland Department of Aging.
<https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/state-long-term-care-ombudsman.aspx>

²Lingamfelter, P. *The crucial role of long-term care ombudsmen: Insights from the National Ombudsman Reporting System*. (November 2025). AARP Public Policy Institute.
<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/topics/ltss/nursing-homes/crucial-role-long-term-care-ombudsmen-insights-from-the-national-ombudsman-reporting-system.doi.10.26419-2fppi.00385.001.pdf>

³Maryland aging slightly faster than U.S. as a whole, new Census numbers show. (5 July 2025). Maryland Matters.
<https://marylandmatters.org/2025/07/05/maryland-aging-slightly-faster-than-u-s-as-a-whole-new-census-numbers-show/>

residents over 65 received \$4.40 per capita in ombudsman services in New Jersey, while in the District of Columbia it was \$12.94.

Annually, the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman receives \$668,000 from the federal government through the Older Americans Act and \$1.1 million through the general budget of the Maryland Department of Aging. Through the Nursing Home Quality Assessment statute, nursing facilities pay an annual tax to support resident Medicaid stays and incentivize pay-for-performance. The tax raised nearly \$190 million in 2025, with \$130 million reimbursed to nursing homes for Medicaid and \$16-20 million to pay-for-performance. This bill would redirect 3% of these funds annually - less than \$6 million - to the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

Increasing resources for the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman would secure this crucial program, and better align the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman with Longevity Ready Maryland, our state's aging plan. Most importantly, it would ensure Maryland's long-term care residents continue to have access to free and confidential support when they most need it.

Thank you for the committee's consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 671.