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**SB 530 Aging-in-Place Programs - Grants - Multigenerational Third Places
(The Village Multigenerational Third Places Act)
Senate Finance Committee
March 11, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 530. My name is Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland, one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, with approximately 850,000 members. We bring the voices of older Marylanders and their families to the policymaking table. We thank Senator Hettleman for introducing this legislation.

Older adults thrive when they can remain in their homes and communities with dignity, stability, and social support, and AARP Maryland regularly hears from our members that this is their preferred pathway for aging for as long as possible. SB 530 strengthens the commitment to this practice by expanding the allowable uses of the aging-in-place grant program to include multigenerational third places, or community spaces where meaningful interaction occurs.

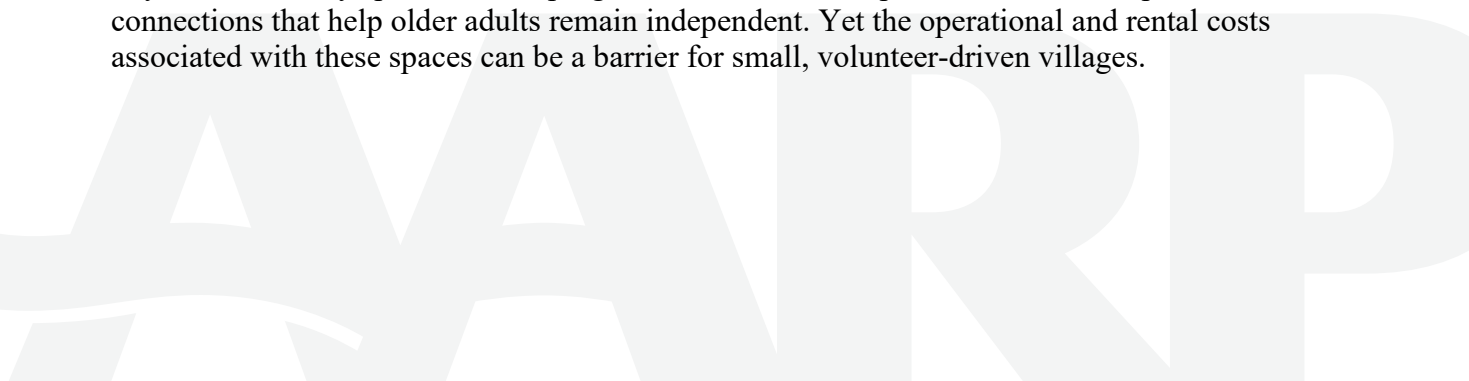
These spaces play a vital role in reducing social isolation, which is one of the most significant risk factors for declining health among older adults. By supporting community gathering places, whether at libraries, senior centers, parks, cafés, and other accessible venues, SB 530 gives seniors more opportunities to connect, build relationships, and stay engaged.

Codifying Current Department of Aging Practice

It is also important to note that SB 530 codifies work that the Maryland Department of Aging is already doing. The Department has supported senior villages and aging-in-place initiatives in ways that naturally integrate third-place programming and community-based social supports. This bill simply formalizes those practices in statute, providing clear guidance and greater consistency for nonprofit partners and area agencies on aging. This clarity will strengthen the effectiveness of a program that community organizations already rely on.

Strengthening Senior Villages

Maryland's senior villages are a cornerstone of the State's aging-in-place infrastructure. Many rely on community spaces to host programs, run volunteer operations, and build personal connections that help older adults remain independent. Yet the operational and rental costs associated with these spaces can be a barrier for small, volunteer-driven villages.



SB 530 directly addresses this challenge by allowing grant funds to cover operational and administrative costs, short- or long-term leases or rental agreements to access third places, and events and gatherings that foster connection among older residents. This flexibility ensures villages can meet local needs without straining limited budgets.

SB 530 makes these improvements without increasing the required State appropriation. It maintains the existing minimum funding level of \$100,000 per year and keeps the requirement that at least 20 percent of funds support senior villages.

Conclusion

Aging in place requires more than services; it requires community. SB 530 recognizes that social connection is essential to health, independence, and quality of life for older Marylanders. By supporting multigenerational third places and codifying practices already underway at the Department of Aging, this bill strengthens the State's commitment to help seniors remain connected and supported.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 530.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.