



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 945

DATE: February 26, 2026

SPONSOR: Delegate Sample-Hughes

ASSIGNED TO: Health

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POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS (Department of Health and Human Services)

Nursing Homes - Complaints - Notification and Consultation

House Bill 945 requires the Maryland Department of Health to notify a local health department if the Department initiates an investigation of a nursing home complaint in the county in which the local health department is located and to the extent practicable consult and coordinate with the local health officer on the complaint investigation and response.

House Bill 945 offers a solution to the Department's transparency and workload issues related to nursing home inspections that have concerned stakeholders over recent years, notably, staffing shortages and inspection backlogs; long-standing delays in nursing home inspections, complaint investigations, and enforcement actions, especially during and after the COVID 19 epidemic; limited transparency of performance metrics including response times, complaint resolution, and inspection frequency; lack of structured stakeholder input, especially from residents, frontline workers, and community organizations; and growing public concern about quality of care and safety in nursing homes.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services is uniquely positioned among local health departments as it is currently the sole local department undergoing negotiations with the Department to reinstate the shared role in conducting nursing home inspections and surveys it held until 2021. To the extent House Bill 945 supports the goals of Montgomery County DHHS to play a role in State-subsidized nursing home complaint investigations and responses, MCDHHS supports the intent of the bill. Notifying the local health department if the Department initiates an investigation of a nursing home complaint is a key component of improving transparency and creates opportunities for stakeholder insight and subsequent feedback on the Department's performance of nursing home oversight. However, MCDHHS would urge the committee to consider whether the requirement for the local health officer to consult and coordinate with the Department on complaint investigations and responses creates an unfunded mandate on local departments who do not necessarily have the resources or appropriate staff to assist the Department in its federally mandated oversight role.

MCDHHS respectfully urges the committee to clarify that House Bill 945 does not create a new obligation for local health departments to assume the responsibilities of the Department in nursing home oversight and instead offers local departments the ability to gain information and access to the Department's work in nursing homes in each county. A small technical amendment to replace "health officer" with "health department" on page 2 in line 13 is also appropriate to recognize the structure of an integrated local department of health and human services, such as MCDHHS.

We respectfully urge the committee to adopt the above amendments and issue a favorable report on House Bill 945.