



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpm
facebook.com/aarpm

**HB 278 Human Services - Department of Aging and Commission on Aging
(The Longevity Ready Maryland Act)
House Health Committee
February 5, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland proudly supports House Bill 278, The Longevity Ready Maryland Act.

AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members across the state, making it one of the largest membership-based organizations advocating for older Marylanders. We welcomed the launch of the Longevity Ready Maryland initiative in January 2024 and served as a key stakeholder in the plan's development. This comprehensive, 10-year multisector plan aligns state, local, nonprofit, and private partners to strengthen aging services across Maryland. The plan also aligns with AARP's mission to empower people to live their best life as they age.

Maryland is entering a pivotal moment, as our population is rapidly aging. We must ensure our systems, services, and communities are prepared to support older adults with dignity, independence, and opportunity. According to recent Census data, the population of Marylanders age 65 and older grew by more than 3 percent in a single year, while the population under 18 declined. This demographic shift is widening and demands coordinated, strategic action.

HB 278 does just that by strengthening the leadership needed to guide this work. It enhances the role of the Secretary of Aging, ensuring Maryland can assess needs, coordinate programs, and educate the public effectively. The bill modernizes and diversifies the Commission on Aging, expanding representation across a range of categories, helping ensure that decisions made by the Commission reflect the lived experiences of all Marylanders.

The bill also builds transparency and accountability through annual reporting to the Governor and the General Assembly, keeping progress visible and ensuring that funds for aging services are used effectively.

Finally, HB 278 requires regular updates to the Longevity Ready Maryland Plan to ensure it stays responsive to changing needs, research, and best practices. As a state, we need this bill so that we can make the implementation of the Longevity Ready Maryland Plan a reality.

Age-friendly planning benefits everyone. When we design communities with safe streets, accessible housing, reliable transportation, and opportunities for connection and lifelong

learning, people of *all* ages benefit. This legislation is about more than aging. It is about shaping a Maryland where every person, at every stage of life, can thrive.

AARP Maryland urges a **favorable report** on HB 278 so we can build a stronger, more equitable, and more age-friendly future for all Marylanders.

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