

January 20, 2026

Chair William C. Smith, Jr.
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB140/HB216 – Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Fello, we write in support of ***SB140/HB216 – Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation.***

Across Maryland, Fello is building communities where people belong. With a team of more than 650 employees, Fello supports over 5,000 people with disabilities each year – creating opportunities that empower people to live the lives they choose. From advancing equity and respect to expanding access and connection, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. One powerful way this comes to life is through Fello Communities: beautiful, safe, and accessible rental housing that offers choice and stability for residents across income levels, from affordable to market-rate homes.

SB140/HB216 creates a felony for coercing, deceiving, or exploiting someone to obtain government benefits – including Medicaid, Medicare, TANF, SNAP, WIC, Social Security, and T-DAP – and strengthens protections for vulnerable individuals while holding perpetrators accountable.

Fraud involving Medicaid and other government benefits not only harms the individuals whose benefits are stolen, but also adds strain to organizations operating within an already complex and challenging system. Establishing clear criminal penalties for these actions is an important step toward safeguarding public resources, protecting vulnerable populations, and ensuring these programs function as intended.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB140/HB216.

Sincerely,



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