



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB0216

January 27, 2026

TO: Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 216 – Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation

POSITION: Support

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill 216.

HB 216 clarifies that exploitation related to another person's government benefits is a criminal act that should be prohibited in the State of Maryland. The bill also clearly defines the methods by which bad actors exploit others for their own personal gain, including coercion, deception, and isolation. This bill is critical to ensuring older adults and persons with disabilities, who are often targeted by this type of exploitation, are protected from this type of exploitation and trafficking.

HB 216 will strengthen our ability to protect residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The Baltimore City Health Department's Division of Aging and Community Support serves as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Baltimore City. The agency also houses the Long-term Care Ombudsman program, which advocates for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Our Ombudsman staff report that some of these facilities are taking advantage of their residents' vulnerability and isolation and, through coercion and deception, are gaining control of their benefit payments. By defining forms of exploitation and deception and creating criminal penalties for them, SB 140 will strengthen the ability of our agency and our law enforcement partners to protect the rights of these vulnerable residents.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 216.