



**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 216
Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation**

**House Judiciary Committee
January 27, 2026 at 2:00 PM**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsors: Delegates Kaufman, Fair, Feldmark, Pena-Melnyk, and Tomlinson

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of People on the Go Maryland, the statewide self-advocacy and systems advocacy organization run for and by people with intellectual and or/ people developmental disabilities. We are writing to express our strong support for House Bill 216, Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation, and to respectfully request a favorable report.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often targeted for exploitation. Some of us receive government benefits like Social Security, SNAP, Medicaid, and other supports that help us live independently in our communities. Unfortunately, there are people who take advantage of us and steal our benefits for themselves. This is wrong, and it hurts us deeply.

House Bill 216 will protect people with disabilities from those who would exploit us. This bill makes it a crime for someone to recruit, harbor, transport, or obtain a person for the purpose of

stealing their government benefits through deception, coercion, exploitation, or isolation. These are tactics that abusers use against people with disabilities every day.

We know what it is like to be taken advantage of. Some of us have had family members, direct supporters, or people we thought were our friends steal our benefits. Some of us have been isolated from our real friends and family. Some of us have been threatened or scared into giving up our money. This kind of abuse makes it hard for us to trust people and to live the lives we want to live.

House Bill 216 sends a clear message that exploiting people with disabilities is a serious crime. It will give law enforcement the tools they need to prosecute people who steal our benefits. It recognizes that this kind of exploitation can include many different types of government benefits, from Social Security to veterans benefits to SNAP. It also recognizes the many ways people can be exploited – through threats, lies, isolation, and other harmful tactics.

We believe that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve to be safe from exploitation. We deserve to have control over our own money and benefits. We deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. House Bill 216 will help protect these rights.

People on the Go Maryland strongly supports House Bill 216 and request this committee to give it a favorable report. We believe this legislation is an important step toward protecting people with disabilities from financial abuse and exploitation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

People on the Go Maryland

For questions, please contact:

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