



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

*Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish
Council*

*Catholic Charities of
Baltimore*

*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County*

*Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic
Conference*

*Mental Health
Association of Maryland*

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter*

Presbytery of Baltimore

*The Coordinating
Center*

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The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that support policies that meet the housing, health, and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

House Bill 216 would create a criminal offense of “benefits exploitation.” Benefits exploitation would make it a felony to knowingly recruit, harbor, transport or obtain an individual for the purpose of appropriating the government benefits of an individual for the benefit of the person or another through deception, coercion, exploitation, isolation or any other means. Government benefits include but are not limited to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and Veterans.

Many older adults rely on their government benefits as their main or only source of income. Creating protections for these benefits and ensuring legal criminal ramifications for those who exploit older adults is an unfortunate necessity today. We know that there are bad actors – sometimes family members, neighbors, or long term care staff – who take advantage of an older adult’s vulnerability and isolation, and gain control of their benefit payments. In fact, some facilities automatically hook-up government benefits to directly deposit into their own accounts, leaving older adults unable to access their funds.

HB 216, by defining forms of exploitation and deception, and creating criminal penalties for them, will strengthen the ability of law enforcement parties to protect the rights of older adults and ensure older adults can receive the full relief and protection they need when their government benefits have been exploited.

For these reasons, MSCAN respectfully requests a favorable report for on HB 216.