



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-21666-542-216163 | Fax: 410-21637-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmd
facebook.com/aarpmd

HB 216 - Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation
House Judiciary Committee
January 27, 2026
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the House Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 216, Benefits Exploitation.

My name is Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland, one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, encompassing almost 850,000 members. AARP Maryland thanks Speaker Pena-Melnyk and Delegates Kaufman, Fair, Feldmark, and Tomlinson for sponsoring this legislation.

Why AARP Maryland Supports HB 216

HB 216 is a crucial piece of legislation aimed at preventing the exploitation of vulnerable individuals and safeguarding their government benefits. Exploitation of vulnerable individuals, particularly older adults and those with disabilities, is a pervasive issue that affects far too many Marylanders. These individuals are often targeted by unscrupulous individuals who seek to exploit their trust and vulnerability for personal gain. HB 216 seeks to address this issue by prohibiting the recruitment, harboring, transportation, or obtaining of an individual for the purpose of appropriating their government benefits through deception, coercion, exploitation, isolation, or any other means.

AARP Maryland believes it is important to highlight the critical link between benefits exploitation and unlicensed care facilities. These facilities often operate in the shadows, providing substandard care to vulnerable individuals while exploiting their government benefits, often for personal gain by the operators.

By prohibiting the exploitation of benefits, HB 216 offers one part of the solution to preventing the proliferation of these unlicensed facilities. This legislation will help ensure that our state's most vulnerable citizens are protected from those who would seek to harm them, and that they receive the quality care they deserve.

I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 216. Thank you.

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

