

SENATE BILL 797

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By: **Senators Hettleman and Jennings**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2023

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder
4 Abuse; and generally relating to the Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder
5 Abuse.

6 Preamble

7 WHEREAS, The proportion of Maryland's population age 60 and older is growing
8 more rapidly than other components of the population. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates
9 that 22% of Maryland's population will be 60 and older by the year 2030, an increase of
10 26% from 2012, and the number of Marylanders 65 or older is expected to double by 2030
11 (about 1.2 million people, or nearly one in every five Marylanders). The fastest growing
12 population are people age 85 and older – people who are at increased risk for a variety of
13 illnesses and dementias resulting in greater risk for abuse and exploitation; and

14 WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, only
15 4.5% of older adults live in nursing homes; only 2% in assisted living facilities; and the
16 majority of older adults, 93.5%, live in the community; and

17 WHEREAS, According to the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and
18 Victim Services, in 2015, an older adult is abused every 5 seconds in Maryland; and

19 WHEREAS, According to the National Council on Aging, 1 in 10 adults age 60 and
20 older are being abused; and

21 WHEREAS, The National Council on Aging reports that only 1 in 24 cases of elder
22 abuse are reported to authorities, and the National Adult Protective Services Association
23 reports that only 1 in 44 cases of financial abuse are ever reported. True Link Financial
24 estimates that 37% of seniors are affected by financial abuse in any 5-year period and the

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 National Council on Aging estimates the annual loss by victims of financial abuse to be at
2 least \$36.5 billion; and

3 WHEREAS, § 14–101 of the Family Law Article defines “abuse” as the sustaining of
4 any physical injury by a vulnerable adult as a result of cruel or inhumane treatment or as
5 a result of a malicious act by any person; and

6 WHEREAS, The General Assembly is committed to protecting vulnerable adults and
7 all older adults from abuse, neglect, abandonment, human trafficking, and exploitation;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, § 14–101 of the Family Law Article defines “vulnerable adult” as an
10 adult who lacks physical or mental capacity to provide for the adult’s daily needs; and

11 WHEREAS, Laws need to be enacted pertaining to older adults not deemed
12 vulnerable; and

13 WHEREAS, The General Assembly wishes to affirm its commitment to the
14 well-being and safety of all of its older adult community members and to ensure that they
15 will be protected and their rights respected; and

16 WHEREAS, Each of our elected leaders has the ability and obligation to promote
17 safety for all older adults, including healthy and productive aging, and bringing an end to
18 abusers not being held accountable for the harm they inflict; and

19 WHEREAS, The General Assembly wishes to affirm its commitment to the provision
20 of a comprehensive, integrated set of laws that protect victims of elder abuse and
21 exploitation; and

22 WHEREAS, The General Assembly wishes to affirm its commitment to enabling the
23 courts to issue fair, just, and appropriate judgments against abusers by being educated
24 about elder abuse and being able to recognize inherent elder abuse in cases which do not
25 appear to be elder abuse crimes but rather other crimes committed against older adults;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, Maryland’s laws on elder abuse need to be reviewed, updated, and
28 expanded to better protect Maryland’s seniors; now, therefore,

29 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
30 That:

31 (a) There is a Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse.

32 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

33 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of
34 the Senate;

- 1 (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the
2 House;
- 3 (3) the Attorney General of Maryland, or the Attorney General's designee;
- 4 (4) the Secretary of Aging, or the Secretary's designee;
- 5 (5) the Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, or the Chief's
6 designee;
- 7 (6) the Executive Director of CHANA, or the Executive Director's designee;
- 8 (7) the Maryland Chief Medical Examiner, or the Chief Medical
9 Examiner's designee;
- 10 (8) the Director of the Office of Adult Services, or the Director's designee;
- 11 (9) the Executive Director of 2-1-1 Maryland, or the Executive Director's
12 designee;
- 13 (10) the Director of Forensic Nursing at the Baltimore Mercy Medical
14 Center, or the Director's designee; and
- 15 (11) the following members appointed by the Governor:
- 16 (i) one representative of the Maryland Office of Health Care
17 Quality;
- 18 (ii) one representative of the Baltimore City Circuit Court
19 Guardianship program;
- 20 (iii) one representative of Maryland Legal Aid;
- 21 (iv) one representative of Baltimore Senior Legal Services;
- 22 (v) one representative of the Montgomery County Family Justice
23 Center; and
- 24 (vi) one representative of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task
25 Force.
- 26 (c) The Governor shall designate the chair of the Task Force.
- 27 (d) The Department of Aging shall provide staff for the Task Force.
- 28 (e) A member of the Task Force:

1 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

2 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
3 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

4 (f) (1) The Task Force shall:

5 (i) study existing laws, policies, and practices relating to elder abuse
6 and other crimes commonly committed against older adults; and

7 (ii) make recommendations regarding changes to State law, policy
8 and practice that would aid in preventing elder abuse.

9 (2) In making recommendations under paragraph (1)(ii) of this subsection,
10 the Task Force shall consider:

11 (i) the role of the State;

12 (ii) the amount of resources to be expended;

13 (iii) ways to provide transparency to the public;

14 (iv) funding mechanisms;

15 (v) oversight measures; and

16 (vi) ways to prosecute elder abuse.

17 (g) (1) On or before December 31, 2023, the Task Force shall submit a
18 preliminary report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance
19 with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

20 (2) On or before December 31, 2024, the Task Force shall submit a final
21 report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with §
22 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

23 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
24 1, 2023. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and, at the end of June 30, 2025,
25 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and
26 of no further force and effect.