

SENATE BILL 69

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5lr0861

(PRE-FILED)

By: **Senator Salling**

Requested: September 17, 2024

Introduced and read first time: January 8, 2025

Assigned to: Finance

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Maryland Department of Health – Access to Telephones – Study**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Maryland Department of Health to study the feasibility
4 of installing and maintaining a telephone system in assisted living facilities,
5 psychiatric facilities, and nursing homes; and generally relating to a study on
6 telephone access.

7 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
8 That:

9 (a) The Maryland Department of Health shall study and make recommendations
10 on the feasibility of installing and maintaining landline telephone systems in assisted living
11 facilities, psychiatric facilities, and nursing homes.

12 (b) In conducting the study required under subsection (a) of this section, the
13 Department shall:

14 (1) for each type of facility described in subsection (a) of this section:

15 (i) examine the existing state of telephone accessibility, including
16 the availability, privacy, and usability of the telephone provided, if any;

17 (ii) evaluate the cost and logistics related to providing landline
18 telephones in individual rooms or communal spaces, including:

19 1. labor;

20 2. equipment;

21 3. installation; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 4. ongoing maintenance costs;

2 (iii) assess the practical benefits for residents and staff, including:

3 1. enhancing social interaction;

4 2. access to support services; and

5 3. emergency preparedness; and

6 (iv) identify potential barriers to providing a landline telephone,
7 including:

8 1. infrastructure limitations;

9 2. regulatory requirements;

10 3. technological infrastructure;

11 4. ongoing maintenance needs; and

12 5. any facility-specific barriers;

13 (2) identify any circumstances under which a resident's access to a landline
14 telephone may require limitation, including for safety, medical and mental health, and
15 behavioral and security needs;

16 (3) identify and assess any potential alternatives to providing landline
17 telephones;

18 (4) present a comparative analysis of costs, including any differences
19 between public and private assisted living facilities, psychiatric facilities, and nursing
20 homes;

21 (5) identify available and potential federal, State, and local funding
22 options; and

23 (6) consult with the following stakeholders and entities:

24 (i) representatives from assisted living facilities, psychiatric
25 facilities, and nursing homes;

26 (ii) advocacy organizations for seniors, individuals with disabilities,
27 and individuals with mental health illnesses; and

28 (iii) residents and their families.

1 (c) On or before September 30, 2026, the Maryland Department of Health shall
2 submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Senate Finance Committee and
3 the House Health and Government Operations Committee in accordance with § 2-1257 of
4 the State Government Article.

5 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
6 October 1, 2025.