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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 564 - Department of Aging - Assisted Living Program Subsidies – Determinations

Appropriations Committee February 25, 2020 SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 564 (HB564) increases the Senior Assisted Living Group Home Subsidy for the first time in almost 20 years. The bill mandates an increase to \$1,000 while also tying the subsidy to the consumer price index, ensuring that it will increase overtime as inflation occurs. The subsidy amount is to be reassessed every three years by the Department of Aging to determine how much it should be increased by in light of inflation.

Written Comments: This subsidy was established in the 1980s to assist low-income seniors and those with disabilities, who reside in assisted living facilities. Since then we have seen a dramatic increase in the cost of senior care. This subsidy no longer comes anywhere close to adequately covering the cost of quality assisted living care. In fact, this subsidy is so low that it is has become unusable in certain parts of Maryland. In Baltimore County the amount of allocated vouchers is not even entirely used by those who are eligible.

The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies, including CHANA. One of CHANA's many program areas is elder abuse, in which they provide support services for victims of elder abuse in the community. Far too many clients have nowhere else to turn except CHANA after falling victim to elder abuse in a substandard assisted living facility because they could not afford a better place to live. While CHANA's service area is Northwest Baltimore City and County, this story is not unique to this area, it happens across our state. Maryland's population is rapidly aging, with seniors being the fastest growing population segment. This means that the need for quality senior care, that is accessible by all who need it, is only going to continue growing.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report on HB564.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.