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MAYOR

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SB 966

March 5, 2020

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 966 – Health Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Referrals and Licenses

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 966.

The BCA supports SB 966 because it addresses the growing issue of the placement of vulnerable older adults in unlicensed assisted living facilities in Baltimore City and the State of Maryland.

The Baltimore City Health Department’s Division of Aging and CARE Services houses the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, in which certified staff advocate on behalf of long-term care residents, residing in nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Baltimore City. The BCA supports SB 966 because it establishes long-needed requirements for registering “assisted living referrers” and assigning appropriate penalties for referring residents to or operating an unlicensed assisted living facility.

Baltimore City currently has over 440 licensed assisted livings facilities [ALF] and an unknown, but abundant, number of unlicensed care facilities. The use of unlicensed and unregulated “placement agencies” too often place vulnerable adults into unlicensed and unsafe care facilities. These vulnerable adults deserve well-trained, licensed, professional staff to care for them.

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Instead, they are increasingly trapped in a cruel web of care providers and health care professionals who purport to have their best interests at heart, but act quickly to take control of their finances, medical care, and ultimately their freedom. These providers typically assign themselves as the older adult's representative payee, which allows them control over the individual's finances. Then, they move individuals – often using haste and usually without the individual's consent – from one facility to another, compromising what little medical care the vulnerable adult receives and isolating them from anyone who can help them. Through these abusive actions, the perpetrator succeeds in denying the vulnerable adult's right to self-determination and to be treated with dignity and respect.

SB 966 requires the “assisted living referrer” to register with the state, be transparent about their business interests in the care facility, hold them accountable if they refer individuals to an unlicensed facility and appropriately penalizes the operators of these unlicensed facilities.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 966.