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**SB 707 Office of Health Care Quality – Influenza Virus Immunization Education and Information – Assisted Living Facilities
Favorable
February 25, 2021**

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan. I am the director of advocacy for AARP MD. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, encompassing over 850,000 members. AARP MD supports SB 707 Office of Health Care Quality – Influenza Virus Immunization Education and Information – Assisted Living Facilities.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities, and protection from financial abuse.

SB 707 requires the Office of Health Care Quality within the Department of health to monitor the compliance of assisted living facilities with requirements to provide educational and informational materials relating to immunization against influenza virus and immunization against pneumococcal disease.

Older people, and those with chronic health conditions of any age, are especially vulnerable to the influenza virus, and at an increased risk of developing flu-related complications such as pneumonia. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone over the age of six months should be vaccinated against the flu every year, with few exceptions

Public health should promote and protect the health of people and the communities in which they live, learn, work, and play. Strategies to improve the public's health are multifaceted and involve multiple entities, including federal and state governments, health providers, faith- and community-based organizations, and individuals.

From a public health perspective, prevention is always preferable to treatment and cure. However, not all individuals have access to preventive health services, and not everything is preventable. It is widely known that older Americans underuse preventive services, such as screenings. In addition, there are significant racial and ethnic disparities in their use, regardless of income and health insurance status.

Real Possibilities

AARP believes that governments should help people fulfill their personal responsibility to protect their health by taking advantage of health-education opportunities and affordable and appropriate preventive health measures. Policymakers and others at all levels of government should collaborate to develop, fund, implement, and evaluate strategies to protect and improve the public's health.

AARP also believes that governments should support policies and implement programs that promote healthy behaviors. Governments should promote the application of scientific knowledge to policymaking, support the collection and analysis of public health data, and strengthen state and local capacity to deliver public health services.

We applaud the efforts of Senator Feldman for bringing this bill forward to protect Maryland's most vulnerable. AARP MD ask the Committee for a favorable report on SB 707. For questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.