



# *Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network*

## **MSCAN**

*AARP Maryland*

*Alzheimer's  
Association,  
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish  
Council*

*Catholic Charities*

*Central Maryland  
Ecumenical Council*

*Church of the Brethren*

*Episcopal Diocese of  
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities  
Commission of  
Montgomery County*

*Jewish Community  
Relations Council of  
Greater Washington*

*Lutheran Office on  
Public Policy in  
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of  
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic  
Conference*

*Mental Health  
Association of Maryland*

*Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan*

*National Association of  
Social Workers,  
Maryland Chapter*

*Presbytery of Baltimore*

*The Coordinating  
Center*

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## **Testimony in Support of SB 707 – Office of Health Care Quality – Influenza Virus Immunization Education and Information –**

### **Assisted Living Facilities Senate Finance Committee Thursday, February 25, 2021**

The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing and care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

MSCAN supports Senate Bill 707 because it helps to ensure that assisted living residents receive information about the availability of flu shots which can protect them against unnecessary illness and death due to seasonal flu. Sadly, according to the CDC, seniors are at 70-85 % higher risk of death from seasonal flu, and account for 50-70 % of hospitalizations for complications. This year in the midst of Covid19, seasonal flu vaccinations have been especially important for seniors with multiple chronic medical conditions because of their effectiveness in reducing the incidence and severity of the seasonal flu, yet just over half of Marylanders get their flu vaccine – not nearly enough – particularly among Black and Hispanic populations who experience higher flu hospitalizations.

MSCAN supports this bill because it proposes a “work smarter, not harder” approach to the effort. The bill simply requires the Office of Health Care Quality, on their regular monitoring visits, to check to see that assisted living facilities are notifying their residents and staff about the availability of seasonal flu vaccines and the benefits of receiving the shots. Statewide, only 57% of assisted living residents and staff receive annual seasonal flu vaccines. The bill does not place an extra burden on facilities already educating their residents, but encourages those facilities who may not have been notifying their residents and staff to begin doing so. The CDC offers easy to print posters which can be utilized to accomplish this goal, or facilities can use any education method that works best for them.

Seasonal flu vaccines help prevent serious infections, complications, hospitalizations and deaths, particularly important among high risk groups such as the elderly. This bill helps to ensure that assisted living residents and staff are made aware of the benefits and availability of this important preventive resource.

MSCAN respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 707. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.