

SB 707 Influenza Virus Immunization Education and

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Position: FAV



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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.

SB707_FAV_AlzheimersAssociationMD.pdf

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Testimony of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Maryland and National Capital Area Chapters
SB 707 – Office of Health Care Quality – Influenza Virus Immunization Education and Information – Assisted Living Facilities
Position: Favorable

Chair Kelley and Vice-Chair Feldman,

I am Eric Colehamiro, Director of Government Affairs for the Alzheimer's Association in Maryland, and here to ask for your support of SB 707. This legislation requires the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Healthcare Quality (OHCQ) 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 during its annual inspection.

The Alzheimer's Association, a member of Maryland's Oversight Committee for the Quality of Care in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living facilities, has long been concerned about the long-term care industry. Over 40 percent of the residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities have Alzheimer's or another dementia. More than 95 percent of those residents have another chronic condition; their care is complicated.

Maryland's 1680 assisted living facilities (ALFs) are spread out across our state. 1545 of these ALFs, or 92 percent of them, have fewer than 50 beds. Yet the remaining eight percent have the majority of our state's patient population. Additionally, while OHCQ is required to inspect all ALFs on an annual basis, they have long lagged behind in this responsibility; as of February 23rd, of this year, the last data publicly available from OHCQ shows that just 71 percent of annual inspections were completed for FY 2019 [following a 51 percent inspection rate for FY 2018 and a 48 percent inspection rate for FY 2017].

Amidst a COVID-19 pandemic that has disproportionately impacted Maryland's long-term care industry, we must move forward stabilizing these essential providers and improving the quality of care for their residents. This bill takes a step with a small cost but a potentially big impact for residents; it requires OHCQ, in its existing annual inspection of assisted living facilities, to monitor whether these providers are offering—per law—educational and informational materials about the importance of getting your flu and pneumonia shots.

This is a practical measure to aid seniors and our system of long-term care. In particular, for Maryland's 1288 assisted living providers with 10 or fewer beds, their resources to comply with this essential, existing state law may be stretched thin. While larger assisted living facilities may have the means to bring in medical providers on a regular basis, a two-person facility in Belcamp or an eight-person facility in Accokeek likely would not have the resources to have on site medical care to educate and inform residents. Additionally, existing state law only requires ALFs to have a nurse on site once every 45 days. As a result, much of the existing compliance with this law may be a piece of paper which never gets read or distributed.

This legislation takes a small step to make that process of educating and informing assisted living residents, including those living with Alzheimer's or other dementia, a lot better. It potentially reduces the spread of communicable disease. And it works toward a better standard of care amidst Maryland's many assisted living providers. I ask for a favorable report.

SB 707 - Assisted Living Flu Shots.pdf

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Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

*Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish
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*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
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*Housing Opportunities
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*Jewish Community
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*Mental Health
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Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
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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.