

Testimony of Rev. Dr. Alvin Hathaway, Sr.
ACT NOW Baltimore
Before the
Senate Finance Committee
March 8, 2022

SUPPORT – Senate Bill 743 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Affordable Assisted Living Enhanced Care Pilot Program

Good afternoon, Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee. For the record, I am the Rev. Dr. Alvin Hathaway here in support of Senate Bill 743. Now retired, I was the 10th Pastor in Union Baptist Church's 169-year history and the fourth longest serving Pastor. Among a number of other hats I wear currently, I am the founder of ACT NOW Baltimore, a faith-based community action network.

Our mission is to ensure our political leaders are accountable to the people they serve, and to facilitate community dialogue and direct action, bringing neighbors from all backgrounds together to move our City forward. We value measurable outcomes that improve the quality of life for City residents throughout all of Baltimore.

Baltimore's challenges are well-documented. From sky-high crime rates to a lack of access to quality education, jobs, housing and health care, far too many of our brothers and sisters in Baltimore are in despair and seek any sign that gives them a reason to hope and to dream of a better tomorrow. These challenges certainly aren't unique to Baltimore – they exist throughout other low-income communities through the State.

Among the most vulnerable of our residents are our seniors, so many of whom lack not only adequate health services, but basic services to assist them with daily living. We must work together to devise a plan to provide the desperately needed services to cater to this vulnerable population.

As we know, there is a significant waiting list for the Home and Community Based Waiver program – there are currently more than 26,000 seniors on that list.

What we are doing now clearly is not working. We need to start thinking differently and be innovative in our approach to make sure the housing and nutritional needs of our vulnerable seniors are met. The length of the wait list alone demonstrates the current inability of assisted living providers to take in the entirety of that population.

This bill would take the innovative approach needed to create access for our seniors who are now being left behind. It would create a new Affordable Assisted Living Enhanced Care Pilot Program that leverages Medicaid funding to pay for services to attract developers and investors to build assisted living communities for our low and moderate income seniors.

Our neighbor Washington, DC is doing this right now. Maryland can do the same – and we must. We need to think outside the box about new and innovative ways to serve and care for our vulnerable seniors. This bill presents a wonderful opportunity to do just that.

On behalf of ACT NOW Baltimore and in solidarity with our senior brothers and sisters, I urge you to support this important piece of legislation.