

Testimony Before the Senate Finance Committee

Senate Bill 624 Assisted Living Programs – Assisted Living Referrers – Requirements and Prohibitions

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for Senate Bill 624– Assisted Living Programs - Assisted Living Referrers – Requirements and Prohibitions.

As social workers, we support this bill because it provides protections for vulnerable adults who need care in an assisted living facility. The bill enhances the current law covering assisted living referral agencies by requiring that their staff undergo criminal background checks. This provision is essential to protecting potential residents. In addition, the bill's conflict of interest and privacy provisions safeguard vulnerable adults from exploitation and fraud.

It has been our experience that assisted living referral agencies often operate purely for profit, without regard to the needs or rights of the individuals who need care in assisted living facilities. We hear from families that these agencies often refer families to facilities that are ill-equipped to provide the needed care. Some referral agencies even direct families to unlicensed facilities. We have also worked with families who tell us that the agencies sell their information to other providers of eldercare services. Families report receiving aggressive sales calls from these companies, at the very time when they are stressed with difficult decisions about the care of their loved ones. This bill would tighten the requirements for assisted living referrers and hold them to professional standards.

This bill is urgently needed to safeguard the health and wellbeing of Marylanders who need assisted living care. We ask that you give a favorable report to Senate Bill 624.

Respectfully,

Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW

Executive Director, NASW-MD