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SB 824 Health – Accessibility of Electronic Advance Care Planning Documents
FAVORABLE
House Health and Government Operations
March 31, 2022

Chair Pendergrass and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee: I am Ted Meyerson, a volunteer for AARP MD. AARP MD and its members supports **SB 0824 Health – Accessibility of Electronic Advance Care Planning Documents**. We thank Senator Kramer and Delegate Cullison for introducing this legislation.

The utility of Advance Directives is clear. When a patient is unable to speak for her/his self, Advance Directives save families from divisive arguments about the right thing to do, they give clear guidance to health care professionals as to what treatments the patient would want or not want, and most of all they allow the patient to maintain some control over their health care. They are not designed to manage one's death but to manage how one chooses to live.

With that realization in mind, the Maryland General Assembly incorporated a version of an Advance Directive in the Maryland Health Care Decisions Act. Yet, in spite of efforts to gain favor, it appears that people do not want to talk about advance care planning. As a result, Advance Directives have been implemented by less than 30% of eligible adults. Deduct older adults in long-term care facilities and the percentage is even worse.

To counter that hesitancy and to address Advance Care Planning, conversations about and the implementing of Advance Directives must be made normative. We believe the way to do that is to have the institutions that engage people about healthcare talk to them about Advance Directives. If everybody talks about Advance Directives, talking about Advance Care Planning will become just another topic of conversation, not something to be avoided.

SB 0824 is a win-win proposition. Insurers will know what patients want, families won't fight over treatments, loved ones won't be left with feeling of doubt or guilt, providers will have clear guidance, and most of all the patient will be treated as she/he wants to be treated.

AARP MD supports SB 0824 and respectfully requests favorable report. For questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-845

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