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SB 559 Estates and Trusts - Supported Decision Making
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FAVORABLE
February 17, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan. I am the Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the Free State, encompassing almost 870,000 members. **AARP MD overwhelmingly supports SB 559 Estates and Trusts – Supported Decision Making.** We thank Senator Waldstreicher for championing this issue.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that 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 559 authorizes the use of Supported Decision Making. Supported Decision Making allows adults to retain their decision-making capacity by choosing supporters to help them make choices. A person using Supported Decision Making selects trusted advisors, such as friends, family members, or professionals, to serve as supporters. SB 559 codifies Supported Decision Making in Maryland law and outlines the guidelines and protections for both the individual and the individual's supporter.

Supported Decision Making has emerged as a cutting-edge alternative to guardianship, placing the individual at the center of the decision-making process. Supported Decision Making describes the process by which most individuals make decisions - by consulting with friends, family, social services, community organizations, and and/or other sources of support to weigh the pros and cons of a decision, review potential outcomes, and finally make a choice. Supported Decision Making promotes self-determination, control, and autonomy. It fosters independence. We all engage in Supported Decision Making. We all consult with family or friends, colleagues or classmates, mechanics or mentors before we make decisions.

AARP for nearly a decade has advocated for and has led to reforms that include establishing standards and training for guardians, safeguarding the rights of those under guardianship, combating abuse and strengthening court oversight of guardians and conservators. Other reforms encourage judges to make guardianships a last resort and to explore, when appropriate, less restrictive alternatives including Supported Decision Making.



AARP shares the provisions of Supported Decision Making, which align perfectly with our bedrock principles: empowering people to choose how they live as they age and to lead their best lives possible.

For these reasons, AARP supports SB 559. AARP MD respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report. For questions or follow up, please contact Tammy Bresnahan tbresnahan@arp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.