

**Testimony before House and Government Operations Committee  
Support**

**HB 161 – Criminal Law - Exploitation of Vulnerable Adult or Elderly Individual - Undue Influence  
January 27, 2022**

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports House Bill 161 – *Criminal Law - Exploitation of Vulnerable Adult or Elderly Individual - Undue Influence*. This bill updates protections against the exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Social workers frequently work with vulnerable populations and support implementing protections to prevent the exploitation of our clients. Not all incidents of financial exploitation of seniors involve explicit force or coercion. Many times, people seeking to exploit vulnerable adults use their relationship to persuade them to agree to things. This bill sets up a legal process where a judge will evaluate a variety of factors to evaluate whether undue influence has occurred. By clarifying that undue influence can include excessive persuasion and creating a legal process to assess potential undue influence, this bill is an essential step in protecting vulnerable adults and seniors in Maryland.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 161. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW-C, Executive Director, NASW MD ([mdemartino.naswmd@socialworkers.org](mailto:mdemartino.naswmd@socialworkers.org)).