



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB 351

February 16, 2023

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 351 – Maryland Legal Services Corporation - Affordable Life, Wills, and Estate Planning for Seniors Program

POSITION: Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 351.

SB 351 addresses an important need for older adults with limited incomes: their ability to create a will, participate in advance care planning, and create an estate plan. Persons who are at least 65 years old and with a family income at or below the median family income for the State will be eligible to participate in the program. SB 351 requires the Governor to appropriate \$500,000 for the program, to be administered by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

Baltimore City Health Department Division of Aging and CARE Services is the designated Area Agency on Aging for Baltimore City, mandated by federal and State law to plan, coordinate, and fund services for adults 60 and over. The Division's services include legal services, delivered by the Bar Association of Baltimore City. In addition, the Division supports the work of legal services advocates, such as Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Services, to promote estate planning by low-income older adults.

Those involved in this work have found that a significant number of older adults in Baltimore City cannot afford civil legal services. As a result, intergenerational wealth transfers, particularly of family-owned homes, are jeopardized, and the ability of moderate-to-low-income City families to build equity is undermined. SB 351 would allow these older adults and their families to access legal services, protect their assets, and plan for their families' futures.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 351.

*Annapolis – phone: 410.269.0207 • fax: 410.269.6785
Baltimore – phone: 410.396.3497 • fax: 410.396.5136
<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov/>*