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**SB498 Rural Health Collaborative Repeal and
Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition Funding
FAVORABLE
Senate Finance Committee
February 23, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Griffith and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB498 sponsored by Senators Hershey and Mautz. I am Karen Kalla, member of the AARP Maryland Executive Council, resident of Anne Arundel County, and former resident of both Salisbury and Rock Hall. AARP, one of the largest membership-based organizations in Maryland, encompassing more than 850,000 members, supports SB498.

AARP is a non-partisan, non-profit nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthen communities and advocates on those issues that matter to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

We urge support of SB498 which will shift local revenues and expenditures from the Rural Health Collaborative Pilot to the Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition and continue this funding through an annual appropriation by the Governor.

This Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition will provide a clear pathway for sharing resources to assess and enhance the health of the region's populations. Its focus on social determinants of health, healthy living, health equity, and health literacy will offer residents understandings and options to improve their health and make better informed lifestyle choices.

The rural nature of Maryland's mid-shore region and socio-economic status of many of its residents, often challenges access to health care, education, guidance, and support. Healthy lifestyle choices improve the well-being of individuals, their families, and enhance work productivity and community engagement. Preventive care helps to keep people out of emergency rooms, extended hospital visits, and other expensive health facilities. In short, this investment into the well-being of mid-shore individuals, is a positive investment in the well-being of their communities and the region as a whole.

AARP believes that state governments should help rural communities improve local access to health care by facilitating community-based discussions about potential solutions for access problems.



Additionally AARP believes that state governments should provide appropriate incentives for health care plans to extend needed coverage to rural areas; incentives and assistance in recruiting and retaining all types of health care personnel; and technical assistance to rural and underserved communities that seek to develop delivery systems and identify alternative ways to provide access to health care (such as telemedicine systems and improved transportation resources).

For these reasons, AARP Maryland respectfully asks the Senate Finance Committee to issue a favorable report for SB498. If you have questions, please call Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy at 410-302-8451 or at tbresnahan@aarp.org .